

The Quest of the Silver Swan



W. Bert Foster

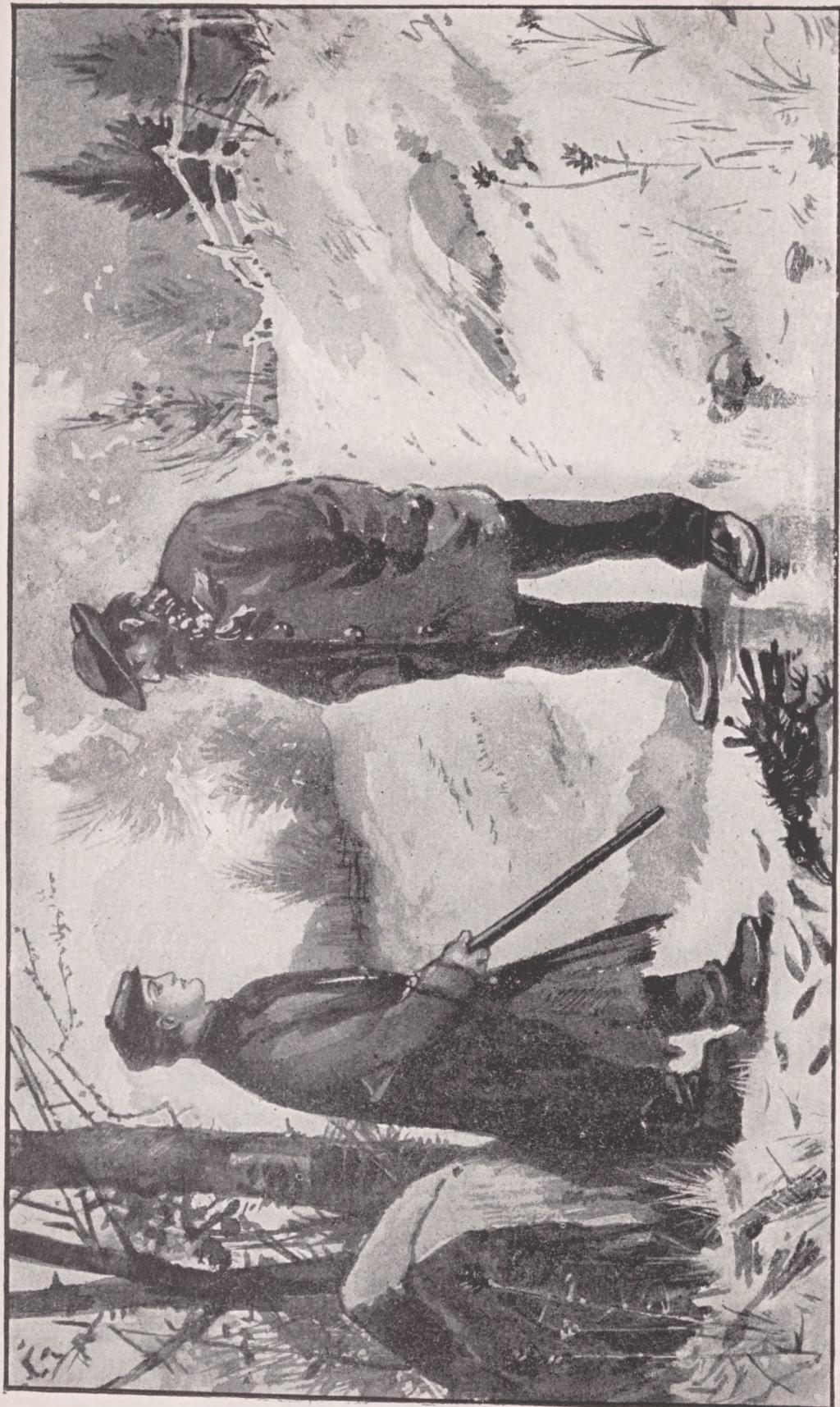


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"WELL, SHIPMATE, OUT GUNNING?"

The Quest of the Silver Swan

THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN

A Land and Sea Tale for Boys

BY

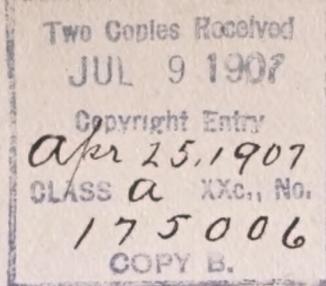
W. BERT FOSTER

Author of "In Alaskan Waters," "With Washington at Valley Forge," "The Lost Galleon," "The Treasure of Southlake Farm," etc.

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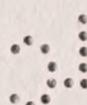
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THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN.



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THE QUEST OF THE SILVER SWAN

CHAPTER I

THE RAFT AT SEA

THE sun, whose upper edge had just appeared above the horizon, cast its first red beams aslant a deserted wilderness of heaving billows.

Here and there a flying fish, spurning its usual element, cut the air like a swift ray of light, falling back into the sea again after its short flight with a splash that sent myriad drops flashing in the sun-light.

There were not a few triangular objects, dark in color, and looking like tiny sails, darting along the surface of the sea, first in this direction and then in that. There was a peculiar sinister motion to these fleshy sails, an appearance to make the beholder shudder involuntarily; for these objects were the dorsal fins of sharks, and there is nothing more bloodthirsty and cruel than these "tigers of the sea."

It was quite noticeable that these monsters had gathered about an object which, in comparison with the vast expanse of sea and sky, was but a speck.

It labored heavily upon the surface of the sea, and seemed to possess a great attraction for the sharks.

It was really a heavily built raft, more than twenty feet in length, and with a short, stumpy mast lashed upright amidships. Near each end was a long sea chest, both placed across the raft, and there were also a broken water butt and several empty cracker boxes lashed firmly (as were the chests) to the strongly built platform.

At one end of this ungainly craft, behind one of the chests, lay two men; at the further side of the opposite chest reclined another.

One might have thought the sea chests to be fortifications, for all three men were heavily armed, and each was extremely careful not to expose his person to the party behind the opposite chest.

Between the two boxes lay the figure of a fourth man; but he was flat upon his face with his arms spread out in a most unnatural attitude. He was evidently dead.

Of the two men who were at the forward end of the raft (or what was the forward end for the time being, the ocean currents having carried the craft in various directions during the several past days), of these two, I say, one was a person of imposing, if not handsome, presence, with curling brown hair streaked with gray, finely chiseled features, and skin bronzed by wind and weather; but now the features were most painfully emaciated, and a blood stained bandage was wrapped about his brow.

His companion was a hearty looking old sea dog, well past the half century mark, but who had evi-

dently stood the privations they had undergone far better than the first named.

He was burned even darker than the other, was of massive figure and leonine head, and possessed a hand like a ham. One leg was bent up beneath him, but the other was stretched out stiffly, and it took only a casual glance to see that the old seaman had a wooden leg.

Every few moments the latter individual raised his head carefully and peered over the chest, thus keeping a sharp watch on the movements of the single occupant of the space behind the other fortification.

This person was a broad shouldered, deep chested man, seemingly quite as powerful as the wooden legged sailor. Privation and hardship had not improved his appearance, either, for his raven black beard and hair were matted and unkempt, and his bronzed face had that peculiar, pinched expression with which starvation marks its victims; and this look did not make his naturally villainous features less brutal.

In truth, all three of these unfortunates were starving to death; the fourth man, who lay so still upon the rough boards between the two chests, was the first victim of the hardships they had suffered for the last ten days.

These four men had been members of the ship's company of the good brig *Silver Swan*, bound to Boston from Cape Town and Rio Janeiro. After leaving the latter port three weeks before, several severe storms had arisen and the brig was beaten terrifically by the elements for days and days.

Finally, after having every stick wrenched from her and even the jury mast the crew had rigged, stripped bare, the brig, now being totally unmanageable, was blown upon a narrow and barren reef several leagues to the south and west of Cuba.

The crew, who had ere this most faithfully obeyed the captain and mate, Caleb Wetherbee, now believing the vessel about to go to pieces, madly rushed to the boats, and lowering them into the heavy sea, lost their lives in their attempt to leave the brig.

Captain Tarr and mate Wetherbee were able to save only two of the unfortunates — Paulo Montez, a Brazilian, and Jim Leroyd, the latter the least worthy of all the crew.

These four had built the rude raft upon which they had now floated so long, and not daring to remain with the brig during another storm that seemed imminent, they set sail in the lumbering craft and left the well built and still seaworthy brig hard and fast upon the reef.

This storm, which had frightened them from the Swan, was only severe enough to strip their rude mast of its sail and rigging and drive them seemingly far out of the course of other vessels, for not a sail had they sighted since setting out on the raft.

Slowly their provisions had disappeared, while the now calmed sea carried them hither and thither as it listed; and at last the captain and mate had decided to put all hands upon still shorter allowance.

At this, Leroyd, always an ugly and brutal fellow even aboard ship, had rebelled, and had tried to stir up his companion, Paulo, to mutiny against the two offi-

cers; but the Brazilian was already too far gone to join in any such scheme (in fact, he died the next forenoon), and Caleb Wetherbee had driven Leroyd to his present position behind the further chest, at the point of his pistol.

Captain Tarr, who had received a heavy blow on the head from a falling block at the time of the brig's wreck, was far less able to stand the hardship than either of his living companions, and, now that ten full days had expired since leaving the Silver Swan, he felt himself failing fast.

Alone, he would have been unable to cope with Leroyd; but Caleb Wetherbee stood by him like a faithful dog and kept the villainous sailor in check. As Leroyd had demanded his share of the water and scanty store of provisions, the mate had, with careful exactness, given him his third and then made him retire behind his chest again; for he could not trust the fellow an instant.

"The scoundrel would put two inches o' steel between both our ribs for the sake o' gettin' the whole o' this grub," declared Caleb, keeping a firm grip upon his pistol.

"He'd only shorten my time a little, Cale," gasped Captain Tarr, a paroxysm of pain weakening him terribly for the moment. "I can't stand many such times as *that*," he added, when the agony had passed.

"Brace up, cap'n," said the mate cheerfully. "You'll pull through yet."

"Don't deceive yourself, or try to deceive me, Caleb," responded Captain Tarr gloomily. "I know my end is nigh, though I'm not an old man yet —

younger than you, old trusty, by ten years. And my life's been a failure, too," he continued, more to himself than to his companion.

"Tut! tut! don't talk like that 'ere. Ye'll have ter pull through for the sake o' that boy o' yours, you know."

"I shall never see him again," declared the injured man, with confidence. "And how can I die in peace when I know that I shall leave my son penniless?"

"Penniless!" exclaimed Wetherbee. "Didn't you own the brig, an' ain't you been makin' v'y'ges in her for the past ten year?"

"I *did* own the Silver Swan, and I *have* made paying voyages with her," replied the captain weakly; "but, shame on me to have to say it, all my earnings have been swallowed up by a speculation which turned out to be utterly worthless. A sailor, Caleb, should stick by the sea, and keep his money in shipping; I went into a mine in Nevada and lost every cent I had saved."

"But there was the Swan," said the dumfounded mate; "there'll be the int'rest money on her — and a good bit it should be, too."

"Aye, *should* be," muttered Captain Tarr bitterly; "but the brig is on that reef and there's not a cent of insurance on her."

"What! no insurance?" gasped Wetherbee.

"No. When I left port last time my policy had run out, and I hadn't a cent to pay for having it renewed. So, if the old brig's bones whiten on that reef, poor Brandon will not get a cent."

"*If they do,*" exclaimed the mate in wonder.

"*Yes, if they do,*" responded Captain Tarr, rising on his elbow and speaking lower, so that there could be no possibility of the man at the other end of the raft hearing his words; "for it's my firm conviction, Caleb, that we'd done better to stick by the old Swan. This last storm drove hard from the west'ard. Suppose she'd slipped off again into deep water? She didn't leak enough to keep her sweet, in spite of the terrific pounding she got from waves and rocks, and she might float for weeks — aye, for months — and you know she'd have plenty of company drifting up and down the Atlantic coast."

"But that ain't probable, cap'n, though I'll grant ye that we might have done better by stickin' by her a while longer."

"Probable or not, Caleb, I *feel* that it is true. You know, they say a dying man can see some things plainer than other folks."

Caleb was silenced by this, for he could not honestly aver that he did not believe his old commander to be near his end.

"And we had a valuable cargo, too, you know — very valuable," murmured Captain Tarr. "I put every cent I received from the sale of the goods we took to Cape Town into this cargo, and would have cleared a handsome profit — enough to have kept both Brandon and me in good circumstances for a year. And then, there is something else."

"Well, what is it?" Caleb asked, after taking a squint over the top of their breastwork to make sure that Leroyd had not ventured out.

"If I'd got home with the Silver Swan, Caleb, I should have been rich for life, and *you*, old trusty, should have had the brig just as she stood, for the cost of makin' out the papers."

"What?" exclaimed Caleb.

He looked at his commander for several moments, and then shook his head slowly. He believed that the privation they had suffered had at length affected even Captain Horace Tarr's brain.

"I'm not crazy, Caleb," said the captain faintly. "I tell you I should have been immensely wealthy. Brandon should have never wanted for anything as long as he lived, nor should I; and I had already decided to give the brig to you."

"What—what d'ye mean if ye *ain't* crazy?" cried Caleb, in bewilderment.

"Do you remember the man who came aboard the brig at Cape Town, just before we sailed?" asked Captain Tarr, in a whisper, evidently saving his strength as much as possible for his story. "He was a friend of my brother Anson."

"Anson!" interjected Caleb. "Why, I supposed *he* was dead."

"He is now," replied the captain; "but instead of dying several years ago, as we supposed, he had been living in the interior of Cape Colony, and just before he actually did die he gave a package (papers, this man supposed them to be) to an acquaintance, to be delivered to me. I happened to touch at Cape Town before the friend of my brother had tried to communicate with me by mail, and he brought the package aboard the brig himself."

"He did not know what he was carrying—he never would have dared do it had he known—for with a letter from Anson was a package, done up in oil silk, of—diamonds of the purest water!"

"Diamonds!" repeated Caleb.

"Yes, diamonds—thousands of dollars' worth—enough to make one man, at least, fabulously rich!" The captain slowly rolled his head from side to side. "After all these years the luck of the Tarrs had changed, Caleb. Fortune has ever played us false, and even now, just when wealth was in our grasp, it was snatched from us again.

"After wandering up and down the earth for forty years, Anson finally 'struck it rich,' and am I, who was to profit by his good fortune, and the son whom I love more than I do anything else on earth, to lose this treasure after all?"

He fell back upon the raft, and the exertion set the wound in his head to bleeding again. A dark stream appeared beneath the bandage and trickled down his forehead, while he lay, gasping for breath, upon the bit of sailcloth which served him for a bed.

"What did you do with the diamonds?" the mate asked, when the dying man had again become calm.

"I—I have written a letter to Brandon, telling him all about it," gasped the captain. "That is what I wrote the second day we were on the raft. I dared not take them with me from the brig, and they are hidden in the cabin. I know now that we made a grave mistake in leaving the Silver Swan at all, for she may hold together for months."

"Take—take the papers from my pocket, Cale,"

he added, feebly unbuttoning his coat, "and keep them. If you are saved I charge you to give them to Brandon with your own hands, and I can trust you to assist him in every possible way to recover his fortune, should such a thing be possible."

The mate bent over the unfortunate owner of the Silver Swan, and with trembling hands removed several thick documents from his pocket and thrust them into the breast of his flannel shirt.

As he did so and turned again, he saw the scowling visage of Jim Leroyd peering at them above his chest. Quick as a flash he seized his pistol and aimed it at the sailor; but Leroyd dodged out of view at once. Without doubt, however, he had seen the papers passed from the captain to mate Wetherbee.

"Take good care of them, Cale," whispered Captain Tarr. "And let nobody else see them. I believe that Leroyd suspected something back there at Cape Town, for he came into the cabin on an errand just as that friend of poor Anson gave the package into my hands, and I caught him snooping about the companionway several times afterward. It was he I feared most when we left the brig, and therefore dared not take the diamonds with me."

"I'll shoot him yet," muttered the old seaman fiercely, with his weather eye cocked over the top of the chest. "I hated the sight o' that fellow when he first boarded the brig at New York. His face is enough to bring bad luck to any ship."

But the captain was not listening to him. He had floated away into a restless slumber, from which he only awoke once to whisper, "Remember, Cale!" and

then passed into a dreamless sleep from which there could be no awakening in this world.

Caleb Wetherbee closed the captain's eyes tenderly, wrapped him in the bit of sailcloth which had served as his bed, and fastened his lifeless body so that no unexpected roll of the raft would precipitate it into the water. Then he took the scant share of food left of the captain's hoard, and religiously divided it into two equal portions.

"Jim!" he said, when this was done, allowing himself but a moment to gloat over the pitifully meager supply which he laid on the chest lid.

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded the sailor gruffly, cautiously raising his head from behind his fortification.

"Captain Tarr is dead, Jim, and I have divided *his* share o' the grub. Put down your weapons and come forward to the chest and take your part. Remember, no slippery business or I'll bore a hole in ye! Step out now."

Suddenly the sailor arose, his ungainly, dwarfish proportions being more manifest now that he was on his feet, and approached his officer, stepping over the body of Paulo without a glance at it.

His fierce eyes lighted eagerly as he saw the little supply of food (he had already consumed all his own), and he seized it at once. While he did so he looked at the wooden legged sailor with a crafty smile.

"Wot was it the old man give ye, Caleb?" he asked familiarly.

The mate scowled fiercely at him, and did not reply.

"Oh, ye needn't act so onery," went on Leroyd. "I knowed there was somethin'—money I bet—

that was given to the old man at the Cape. He's acted like a new man ever since, and if there's anything in it, I'm goin' ter hev my share, jest like this share o' the grub, now I tell ye!"

"You take that food and git back to your place!" roared Caleb, pointing the huge "bull dog," which had a bore like a rifle, at the fellow's head. "An' let me tell you that I shall be on the watch, I shall, an' it'll be a long say afore you catch Caleb Wetherbee asleep. Ef I ain't saved, *you* won't be, let me tell you, for ef I feel myself a-goin' to Davy Jones, *you'll go along with me!*"

Leroyd sneaked back to his place again, and crouched behind the chest. In that position he could not see the movements of Caleb, who, after a few moments' thought, deposited the packet of papers where he believed no one would think of looking for them.

"There!" he muttered grimly. "If I *do* foller Cap'n Tarr, I reckon these papers'll never do that scoundrel any good, an' he can throw this old hulk to the sharks and welcome. If the cap'n's boy don't profit by 'em, *nobody* shall."

Then he folded his arms, the pistol still in his grasp, and continued his task of watching for the rescuing sail, which it seemed would never come.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING BRANDON TARR AND UNCLE ARAD

LEADING from the village of Rockland, Rhode Island, a wide, dusty country road, deeply rutted here and there, winds up to the summit of a long ridge, the highest land in that portion of the State, which past generations have named Chopmist.

It is a drizzly, chilly spring day, the showers pattering down in true April style, the sun promising to show his face every few minutes, and then, when you are expecting his warming rays, down falls another shower and Sol hides his face in despair.

Near the highest part of the ridge, on the easterly side of the road, stood an old, gambrel roofed, weather beaten house, its end facing the road and its front door at the side as though it, like its present owner, had turned sourly away from the world, refusing even to look out upon the highway which passed socially near it.

The rain dripped steadily into the moss covered water butt at the corner of the house, and a bedraggled chicken, who seemed not to possess enough energy to get under better cover, sat humped up in a most dismal manner under the lilac bush at the other corner of the house.

It was well nigh as dismal inside the house as out.

A miserable little fire of green wood sputtered and hissed in an even more miserable stove, and the faded yellow cambric curtain at the little window, did its best (with the aid of the dirt, which was considerable) to keep the light from penetrating the panes.

At one end of the kitchen was a square deal table littered with soiled dishes left from the morning meal; the two or three chairs about the room were in a state of great dilapidation; and even the old clock on the mantel shelf ticked with a sort of rasping groan, as though every stroke put its rheumatic old wheels and springs in agony.

Before the stove, in a sadly abused, wooden bottomed armchair, and with his back humped up a good deal like the chicken under the lilac bush outside, sat an old man with weazened, wrinkled face, eyes like a hawk's, a beak-like nose, and a sparse settlement of gray hairs on his crown and chin.

He leaned forward in his seat, and both claw-like hands clutching the arms of the chair, seemed to be all that kept him from falling upon the stove.

At the window, just where the light fell best upon the book in his hand, sat a youth of sixteen years — a well made, robust boy, whose brown hair curled about his broad forehead, and whose face was not without marks of real beauty.

Just now his brows were knit in a slight frown, and there was a flash of anger in his clear eyes.

"I dunno what's comin' of ev'rything," the old man was saying, in a querulous tone. "Here 'tis the first o' April, an' 'tain't been weather fit ter plow a furrer, or plant a seed, yit."

"Well, I don't see as it's *my* fault, Uncle Arad," responded the boy by the window. "I don't make the weather."

"I dunno whether ye do or not," the old man declared, after staring across at him for an instant. "I begin ter believe yer a regular Jonah—jest as yer Uncle Anson was, an' yer pa, too."

The boy turned away and looked out of the window at this mention of his parent, and a close observer might have seen his broad young shoulders tremble with sudden emotion as he strove to check the sobs which all but choked him.

Whether the old man was a close enough observer to see this or not, he nevertheless kept on in the same strain.

"One thing there is erbout it," he remarked; "Anson knew *he* was born ter ill luck, an' he cleared out an' never dragged nobody else down ter poverty with him. But your pa had ter marry — an' see what come of it!"

"I don't know as it affected *you* any," rejoined the boy, bitterly.

"Yes, 't'as, too! Ain't I got you on my hands, a-eatin' of your head off, when there ain't a sign of a chance o' gittin' any work aout o' ye?"

"I reckon I've paid for my keep for more'n *one* year," the other declared vehemently; "and up to the last time father went away he always paid you for my board — he told me so himself."

"He did, did he?" exclaimed Uncle Arad, in anger. "Well, he —"

"Don't you say my father lied!" cried the boy, his

eyes flashing and his fists clenched threateningly. "If you do, you'll wish you hadn't."

"Well—I ain't said so, hev I?" whined Uncle Arad, fairly routed by this vehemence. "Ain't you a pretty boy to threaten an old man like me, Brandon Tarr?"

Brandon relapsed into sullen silence, and the old man went on:

"Mebbe Horace *thought* he paid your board, but the little money he ever give me never more'n ha'f covered the expense ye've been ter me, Don."

His hearer sniffed contemptuously at this. He knew well enough that he had done a man's work about the Tarr place in summer, and all the chores during winter before and after school hours, for the better part of three years, and had amply repaid any outlay the old man had made.

Old Arad Tarr was reckoned as a miser by his townsmen, and they were very nearly correct. By inheritance the farm never belonged to him, for he was the youngest son of old Abram Tarr, and had been started in business by his father when he was a young man, while his brother Ezra had the old homestead, as the eldest son should.

But reverses came to Ezra, of which the younger brother, being successful in money matters, took advantage, and when Ezra died at last (worked to death, the neighbors said) the property came into Arad's hands. There was little enough left for the widow, who soon followed her husband to the grave, and for the two boys, Anson and Horace.

Anson was of a roving, restless disposition, and

he soon became disgusted with the grinding methods of old Arad, who sought to get double work out of his two nephews. So he left the farm, and, allured by visions of sudden wealth which led him all over the world, he followed from one scheme to another, never returning to the old place again, though his brother, Horace, heard from him occasionally.

The younger lad was not long in following his brother's footsteps (in leaving home, at least), and went to sea, where he rose rapidly from the ranks of the common sailor to the post of commander.

He married a girl whom he had known in his boyhood, and Brandon, the boy who was now left to the tender mercies of the great uncle, was their only child.

By patient frugality Captain Tarr had amassed sufficient money to purchase a brig called the Silver Swan, and made several exceptionally fortunate voyages to South and West African ports, and to Oceanica.

But after his wife's death (she was always a delicate woman) his only wish seemed to be to gain a fortune that he might retire from the sea and live with his son, in whom his whole heart was now bound. There was a trace of the same visionary spirit in Horace Tarr's nature that had been the *motif* of his brother Anson's life, and hoping to gain great wealth by a sudden turning of the wheel of fortune, he speculated with his savings.

Like many other men, he trusted too much in appearances and was wofully deceived, and every penny

of his earnings for a number of voyages in the brig was swept away.

His last voyage had been to Cape Town, and on the return passage the good Silver Swan had struck on a rock somewhere off Cuba, and was a total loss, for neither the vessel itself, nor the valuable cargo, was insured for a penny's worth.

This had occurred nearly two months before, and the first news Brandon and Uncle Arad had received of the disaster was through the newspaper reports. Two surviving members of the crew were picked up by a New York bound steamship, from a raft which had been afloat nearly two weeks, and but one of the men was in a condition to give an intelligible account of the wreck.

From his story there could be but little doubt of the total destruction of the Silver Swan and the loss of every creature on board, excepting himself and the mate, Caleb Wetherbee, who was so exhausted that he had been taken at once to the marine hospital. Captain Tarr had died on the raft, from hunger and a wound in the head received during the wrecking of his vessel.

It was little wonder, then, with these painful facts so fresh in his mind, that young Brandon Tarr found it so hard to stifle his emotion while his great uncle had been speaking. In fact, when presently the crabbed old man opened his lips to speak again, he arose hastily, threw down his book, and seized his hat and coat.

"I'm going out to see if I can pick off that flock of crows I saw around this morning," he said hastily.

"If you *do* get a chance to plant anything this spring, they'll pull it up as fast as you cover the seed."

"We kin put up scarecrows," said Arad, with a scowl, his dissertation on the "shiftlessness" of Don's father thus rudely broken off. "I can't afford you powder an' shot ter throw away at them birds."

"Nobody asked you to pay for it," returned the boy gruffly, and buttoning the old coat about him, and seizing his rifle from the hooks above the door, he went out into the damp outside world, which, despite its unpleasantness, was more bearable than the atmosphere of the farm house kitchen.

The farm which had come into Arad Tarr's possession in what he termed a "business way," contained quite one hundred acres of cultivated fields, rocky pastures, and forest land.

It was a productive farm and turned its owner a pretty penny every year, but judging from the appearance of the interior of the house and the dilapidated condition of the barn and other outbuildings, one would not have believed it.

There was sufficient work on the farm every year to keep six hired hands beside Brandon and the old man, himself, "on the jump" every minute during the spring, summer, and fall.

In the winter they two alone managed to do the chores, and old Arad even discharged the woman who cooked for the men during the working season.

As soon as the season opened, however, and the old man was obliged to hire help, the woman (who was a widow and lived during the winter with a married sister in the neighborhood) was established again

in the Tarr house, and until the next winter they lived in a manner that Brandon termed "like Christians," for she was a good cook and a neat housekeeper; but left to their own devices during the cold weather, he and his great uncle made sorry work of it.

"The frost is pretty much out of the ground now," Brandon muttered as he crossed the littered barn-yard, "and this drizzle will mellow up the earth in great shape. As soon as it stops, Uncle Arad will dig right in and work to make up for lost time, I s'pose."

He climbed the rail fence and jumped down into the sodden field beyond, the tattered old army coat (left by some hired hand and used by him in wet weather) flapping dismally about his boots.

"I wonder what'll become of me now," he continued, still addressing himself, as he plodded across the field, sinking ankle deep in the wet soil. "Now that father's gone there's nothing left for me to do but to shift for myself and earn my own living. Poor father wanted me to get an education first before I went into anything, but there'll be no more chance for that here. I can see plainly that Uncle Arad means to shut down on school altogether now.

"I'll never get ahead any as long as I stay here and slave for him," he pursued. "He'll be more exacting than ever, now that father is gone—he didn't dare treat me *too* meanly before. He'll make it up now, I reckon, if I stay, and I just *won't!*"

He had been steadily approaching the woods and at this juncture there was a rush of wings and a sudden "caw! caw!"

Crows are generally considered to be endowed with a faculty for knowing when a gun is brought within range, but this particular band must have been asleep, for Brandon was quite within shooting distance as the great birds labored heavily across the lots.

The rifle, the lock of which he had kept dry beneath his armpit, was at his shoulder in a twinkling, there was a sharp report, and one of the birds fell heavily to the ground, while its frightened companions wheeled with loud outcry and were quickly out of view behind the woods.

Brandon walked on and picked up the fallen bird.

"Shot his head pretty nearly off," he muttered. "I believe I'll go West. Knowing how to shoot might come in handy there," and he laughed grimly.

Then, with the bird in his hand, he continued his previous course, and penetrated beneath the dripping branches of the trees.

Pushing his way through the brush for a rod or two he reached a plainly defined path which, cutting obliquely across the wood lot, connected the road on which the Tarr house stood with the "pike" which led to the city, fourteen miles away.

Entering this path, he strolled leisurely on, his mind intent upon the situation in which his father's death had placed him.

"I haven't a dollar, or not much more than that sum," he thought, "nor a friend, either. I can't expect anything but the toughest sort of a pull, wherever I go or whatever I take up; but it can't be worse than 'twould be here, working for Uncle Arad."

After traversing the path for some distance, Don

reached a spot where a rock cropped up beside the way, and he rested himself on this, still studying on the problem which had been so fully occupying his mind for several weeks past.

As he sat there, idly pulling handfuls of glossy black feathers from the dead crow, the noise of a foot-step on the path in his rear caused him to spring up and look in that direction.

A man was coming down the path — a sinister faced, heavily bearded man, who slouched along so awkwardly that Brandon at first thought him lame. But the boy had seen a few sailors, besides his father, in his life, and quickly perceived that the stranger's gait was caused simply by a long experience of treading the deck of a vessel at sea.

He was a solidly built man, not below the medium height, yet his head was set so low between his shoulders, and thrust forward in such a way that it gave him a dwarfed appearance. His hands were rammed deeply into his pockets, an old felt hat was drawn down over his eyes, and his aspect was generally seedy and not altogether trustworthy.

He started suddenly upon seeing the boy, and gazed at him intently as he approached.

"Well, shipmate, out gunning?" he demanded, in a tone which was intended to be pleasant.

"A little," responded Brandon, kicking the body of the dead crow into the bushes. "We're always gunning for those fellows up this way."

"Crows, eh?" said the man, stopping beside the boy, who had rested himself on the rock again.

"They're great chaps for pullin' corn — faster'n you farmers can plant it, eh?"

Brandon nodded curtly, and wondered why the tramp (as he supposed him) did not go along.

"Look here, mate," went on the man, after a moment, "I'm lookin' for somebody as lives about here, by the name of Tarr —"

"Why, you're on the Tarr place now," replied Brandon, with sudden interest. "That's *my* name, too."

"No, it isn't now!" exclaimed the stranger, in surprise.

A quick flash of eagerness came over his face as he spoke.

"You're not Brandon Tarr?" he added.

"Yes, sir," replied Don, in surprise.

"Not Captain Horace Tarr's son! God bless ye, my boy. Give us your hand!"

The man seized the hand held out to him half doubtfully, and shook it warmly, at the same time seating himself beside the boy.

"You knew my father?" asked Brandon, not very favorably impressed by the man's appearance, yet knowing no real reason why he should not be friendly.

"Knew him! Why, my boy, I was his best friend!" declared the sailor. "Didn't you ever hear him speak of Caleb Wetherbee?"

"Caleb Wetherbee!" cried Don, with some pleasure.

He had never seen his father's mate, but he had heard the captain speak of him many times. This man did not quite come up to his expectation of

what the mate of the Silver Swan should have been, but he knew that his father had trusted Caleb Wetherbee, and that appearances are sometimes deceitful.

“Indeed I *have* heard him speak of you many times,” and the boy’s voice trembled slightly as he offered his hand a second time far more warmly.

“Yes, sir,” repeated the sailor, blowing his nose with ostentation, “I’m an old friend o’ your father’s. He — he died in my arms.”

Brandon wiped his own eyes hastily. He had loved his father with all the strength of his nature, and his heart was too sore yet to be rudely touched.

“Why, jest before he — he died, he give me them papers to send to ye, ye know.”

As he said this the man flashed a quick, keen look at Brandon, but it was lost upon him.

“What papers?” he asked with some interest.

“What papers?” repeated the sailor, springing up. “D’ye mean ter say ye never got a package o’ papers from me a — a month ergo, I reckon ’twas?”

“I haven’t received anything through the mail since the news came of the loss of the brig,” declared Don, rising also.

“Then that mis’rable swab of an ’orspital fellow never sent ’em!” declared the man, with apparent anger. “Ye see, lad, I was laid up quite a spell in the ’orspital — our sufferings on that raft was jest orful — an’ I couldn’t help myself. But w’en your father died he left some papers with me ter be sent ter you, an’ I got the ’orspital nurse to send ’em. An’ you must hev got ’em — eh?”

"Not a thing," replied Brandon convincingly.
"Were they of any value?"

"Valible? I should say they was!" cried the sailor.
"Werry valible, indeed. Why, boy, they'd er made
our — I sh'd say *your* — fortune, an' no mistake!"

Without doubt his father's old friend was strangely
moved by the intelligence he had received, and Don
could not but be interested in the matter.

CHAPTER III

'AN ACCOUNT OF THE WRECK OF THE SILVER SWAN

"To what did these papers bear reference?" Brandon asked. "Father met with heavy misfortunes in his investments last year, and every penny, excepting the Swan itself, was lost. How could these papers have benefited me?"

"Well, that I don't rightly know," replied the sailor slowly.

He looked at the boy for several seconds with knitted brows, evidently deep in thought. Brandon could not help thinking what a rough looking specimen he was, but remembering his father's good opinion of Caleb Wetherbee, he banished the impression as ungenerous.

"I b'lieve I'll tell ye it jest as it happened," said the man at length. "Sit down here again, boy, an' I'll spin my yarn."

He drew forth a short, black pipe, and was soon puffing away upon it, while comfortably seated beside Don upon the rock.

"'Twere the werry night we sailed from the Cape," he began, "that I was — er — in the cabin of the Silver Swan, lookin' at a new chart the cap'n had got, when down comes a decently dressed chap — a land-

lubber, ev'ry inch o' him — an' asks if this were Cap'n Horace Tarr.

“‘ It is,’ says the cap’n.

“‘ Cap'n Horace Tarr, of Rhode Island, U. S. A.? ’ says he.

“‘ That's me,’ says the cap'n ag'in.

“‘ Well, Cap'n Tarr,’ says the stranger chap, a-lookin' kinder squint eyed at me, ‘ did you ever have a brother Anson? ’

“ Th' cap'n noticed his lookin' at me an' says, afore he answered the question:

“‘ Ye kin speak freely,’ says he, ‘ this is my mate, Cale Wetherbee, an' there ain't a squarer man, nor an honester, as walks the deck terday,’ says he. ‘ Yes, I had a brother Anson; but I persume he's dead.’

“‘ Yes, he is dead,’ said the stranger. ‘ He died up country, at a place they calls Kimberley, 'bout two months ago.’

“ That was surprisin' ter the cap'n, I reckon, an' he tol' the feller that he'd supposed Anson Tarr dead years before, as he hadn't heard from him.

“‘ No, he died two months ago,’ says the man, ‘ an' I was with him. He died o' pneumonia — was took werry sudden.’

“ Nat'rally this news took the old man — I sh'd say yer father — all aback, as it were, an' he inquired inter his brother's death fully. Fin'ly the man drew out a big package — papers he said they was — wot Anson Tarr had given him ter be sure ter give ter the cap'n when he sh'd see him. Then the feller went.

“ O' course, the cap'n didn't tell me wot the docymenents was, but I reckoned by his actions, an' some

o' the hints he let drop, that they was valible, an' I — I got it inter my head that 'twas erbout money — er suthin' o' the kind — that your Uncle Anson knowed of.

“Wal, the Silver Swan, she left the Cape, 'n' all went well till arter we touched at Rio an' was home-ward boun'. Then a gale struck us that stripped the brig o' ev'ry stick o' timber an' every rag o' sail, an' druv her onter that 'ere rock. There warn't no hope for the ol' brig an' she began to go ter pieces to once, so we tried ter take to the boats.

“But the boats was smashed an' the only ones left o' the hull ship's company was me'n Paulo Montez, and yer father, an' — an' another feller. We built the raft and left the ol' brig, just as she — er — slid off er th' rock an' sunk inter the sea. It — it mos' broke yer father's heart ter see the ol' brig go down an' I felt m'self, jest as though I'd lost er — er friend, er suthin'!”

The sailor paused in his narrative and drew hard upon his pipe for a moment.

“Wal, you know by the papers how we floated around on that 'ere raf' an' how yer poor father was took. He give me these papers just afore he died, an' made me promise ter git 'em ter you, ef I was saved. He said you'd understand 'em ter onces, an'” looking at Brandon keenly out of the corners of his eyes, “I didn't know but ye knew something about it already.”

Brandon slowly shook his head.

“No,” he said; “I can't for the life of me think what they could refer to.”

"No—no buried treasure, nor nothing of the kind?" suggested the man hesitatingly.

"I guess not!" exclaimed Don. "If I knew about such a thing, you can bet I'd be after it right quickly, for I don't know any one who needs money just at the present moment more than I."

"Well, I believe I'll go," cried the sailor, rising hastily. "That 'orspital feller must hev forgotten ter mail them papers, an' I'll git back ter New York ter oncet, an' see 'bout it. I b'lieve they'll be of vally to ye, an' if ye want *my* help in any way, jest let me know. I—I'll give ye a place ter 'dress letters to, an' I'll call there an' git 'em."

He produced an old stump of a pencil from his pocket and a ragged leather note case. From this he drew forth a dog eared business card of some ship chandler's firm, on the blank side of which he wrote in a remarkably bad hand:

CALEB WETHERBEE,
NEW ENGLAND HOTEL,
WATER STREET,
NEW YORK.

Then he shook Don warmly by the hand, and promising to get the papers from the "'orspital feller" at once, struck away toward the city again, leaving the boy in a statement of great bewilderment.

He didn't know what the papers could refer to, yet like all boys who possess a good digestion and average health, he had imagined enough to fancy a hundred things that they *might* contain. Perhaps there

was some great fortune which his Uncle Anson had known about, and had died before he could reap the benefit of his knowledge.

Yet, he felt an instinctive distrustfulness of this Caleb Wetherbee. He was not at all the kind of man he had expected him to be, for although Captain Tarr had never said much about the personal appearance of the mate of the Silver Swan, still Don had pictured Caleb to his mind's eye as a far different looking being.

As he stood there in the path, deep in thought, and with his eyes fixed upon the spot where he had seen the sailor disappear, the fluttering of a bit of paper attracted his attention. He stooped and secured it, finding it to be a greasy bit of newspaper that had doubtless reposed for some days in the note case of the sailor, and had fallen unnoticed to the ground while he was penciling his address on the card now in Don's possession.

One side of the scrap of paper was a portion of an advertisement, but on the other side was a short item of news which Don perused with growing interest.

SAVANNAH, MARCH 3. The Brazilian steamship Montevideo, which arrived here in the morning, reports having sighted, about forty miles west of the island of Cuba, a derelict brig, without masts or rigging of any kind, but with hull in good condition. It was daylight, and by running close the Montevideo's captain made the wreck out to be the Silver Swan, of Boston, which was reported as having been driven on to Reef Number 8, east of Cuba, more than a month ago. The two surviving members of the crew of the Silver Swan were picked up from a raft, after twelve days of terrible suffering, by the steamship Alexandria, of the New York and

Rio Line. The Montevideo's officers report the brig as being a most dangerous derelict, as in its present condition it may keep afloat for months, having evidently withstood the shock of grounding on the reef, and later being driven off by the westerly gale of February 13th.

Her position, when sighted by the Montevideo, has been reported to the Hydrographic Office, and will appear on the next monthly chart.

CHAPTER IV

BRANDON COMES TO A DECISION

THE first thought which flashed across Brandon Tarr's mind as he read the newspaper item quoted in the previous chapter was that the story of the wreck of the Silver Swan, as told by the old sailor, had been totally misleading.

"Why, he lied — point blank — to me!" he exclaimed, "and with this very clipping in his pocket, too."

He half started along the path as though to pursue the sailor, and then thought better of it.

"He declared that he saw the Swan go down with his own eyes; and here she was afloat on the 13th of March — a month after the wreck. He must have wanted to keep the knowledge of that fact from me. But what for? Ah! those papers!"

With this Brandon dropped back on the rock again and read the newspaper clipping through once more. Then he went over the whole matter in his mind.

What possible object could Caleb Wetherbee have in coming to him and telling him the yarn he had, if there was no foundation for it? There must be some reason for the story, Brandon was sure.

Evidently there had been papers either given into the hands of the mate of the Silver Swan, or ob-

tained by him by dishonest means. These papers must relate to some property of value which had belonged to Anson Tarr, Don's uncle, and, his cupidity being aroused, the sailor was trying to convert the knowledge contained in them to his own benefit.

There was probably some "hitch" in the documents — something the rascally mate could not understand, but which he thought Brandon could explain. Therefore, his trip to Chopmist from New York to "pump" the captain's son.

"Without doubt," said the boy, communing with himself, "the papers were brought aboard the brig just as this rascally Wetherbee said, and they were from Uncle Anson. Let's see, he said he died at Kimberley — why, that's right at the diamond mines!" For like most boys with adventurous spirits and well developed imagination, Brandon had devoured much that had been written about the wonderful diamond diggings of South Africa.

"Perhaps — who knows?" his thoughts ran on, "Uncle Anson 'struck it rich' at the diamond mines before he died. There's nothing impossible in that — excepting the long run of ill luck which had cursed this family."

He shook his head thoughtfully.

"If Uncle Anson had owned a share in a paying diamond mine, this rascally sailor would have known at once that the papers relating to it could not benefit him, for the ownership would be on record there in Kimberley. It must, therefore, be that the property — whatever it may be — is in such shape that it can be removed from place to place — perhaps was brought

aboard the brig by the friend of Uncle Anson who told father of his death."

For the moment the idea did not assist in the explanation of the course of Caleb Wetherbee in retaining the papers. But Brandon had set himself to the task of reasoning out the mystery, and when one thread failed him he took up another.

"One would think," he muttered, "that if there had been any money brought aboard the brig, father would have taken it on the raft with him when they left; but still, would he?"

"According to the report the brig grounded on Reef Number 8, and perhaps was not hurt below the water line. The next gale from the west'ard blew her off again. She is now a derelict, *and if the money was hidden on board it would be there now!*"

At this sudden thought Brandon sprang up in excitement and paced up and down the path.

He had often heard of the wrecks of vessels abandoned in mid ocean floating thousands of miles without a hand to guide their helms, a menace and danger to all other craft. The Silver Swan might float for months—aye, for years; such a thing was possible.

"And if the money—if it *is* money—is hidden aboard the brig, the one who finds the derelict first will have it," was the thought which came to him.

"But why should the mate come to *me* about it?" Brandon asked himself. "Why need he let *me* know anything about the papers, or the treasure, if he wished to recover it himself? Didn't he know where on the brig the money was hidden? Or didn't the papers tell that?"

He cudgled his brains for several minutes to think *where* his father would have been likely to hide anything of value on the brig. Was there any place which only he and his father had known about?

This idea suggested a train of reminiscences. He had been aboard the Silver Swan several times while she lay in Boston, and had been all over her.

Once, possibly four years before (it seemed a long time to him now), he had been alone with his father in the cabin, and Captain Tarr had shown him an ingeniously hidden sliding panel in the bulkhead, behind which was a little steel lined cavity, in which the captain kept his private papers.

Perhaps Caleb Wetherbee did not know about this cupboard, and it was this information that he wished to get from him. The idea seemed probable enough, for if he did not know where the treasure was hidden on the brig, what good would the papers relating to it be to him?

“There may be a fortune there, just within my grasp, and yet I not be able to get at it,” muttered Don, pacing the rough path nervously.

“Despite his former confidence in this Wetherbee, father must have doubted him at the last and not dared to take the treasure (if treasure it really is) when he left the brig.

“Instead, he gave him these papers, hoping the fellow would be honest enough to place them in my hands; but, still fearing to fully trust the mate, he wrote his directions to me so blindly, that Wetherbee is all at sea about what to do.

“Wetherbee knows that the brig is afloat — this

clipping proves that—and he hoped to get the information he wanted from me and then go in search of the Silver Swan. *Why can I not go in search of it myself?*"

The thought almost staggered him for an instant, yet to his boyish mind the plan seemed feasible enough. He knew that derelicts are often carried by the ocean currents for thousands of miles before they sink, yet their movements are gradual, and by a close study of the hydrographic charts he believed it would be possible to locate the wrecked brig.

"I've got no money, I know," he thought, "at least, not much; but I've health and strength and an ordinary amount of pluck, and it will be strange if I can't accomplish my purpose if the old brig only holds together long enough."

He looked at the soiled card the sailor had given him.

"'New England Hotel, Water Street,'" he repeated. "Some sailors' boarding house, likely. I believe—yes, I will—go to New York myself and see this scoundrelly Wetherbee again. He can't do *much* without me, I fancy, and perhaps, after all, I can use him to my own benefit. I ought to be as smart as an ignorant old sailor like him."

He stood still a moment, gazing steadily at the ground.

"I'll do it, I vow I will!" he exclaimed at last, raising his head defiantly. "Uncle Arad's got no hold upon me and I'll go. I'll start tomorrow morning," with which determination he picked up his rifle and left the woods.

CHAPTER V

UNCLE ARAD HAS RE COURSE TO LEGAL FORCE

IN the several oceans of our great globe there are many floating wrecks, abandoned for various causes by their crews, which may float on and on, without rudder or sail, for months, and even years. Especially is this true of the North Atlantic Ocean, where, during the past five years, nearly a thousand "derelicts," as these floating wrecks are called, were reported.

The Hydrographic Office at Washington prints a monthly chart on which all the derelicts reported by incoming vessels are plainly marked, even their position in the water being designated by a little picture of the wreck.

By this method of "keeping run" of the wrecks, it has been found that some float thousands of miles before they finally reach their ultimate port—Davy Jones' locker.

The average life of these water logged hulks is, however, but thirty days; otherwise the danger from collision with them would be enormous and the loss of life great. Many of those vessels which have left port within the past few years and never again been heard from, were doubtless victims of collisions with some of these derelicts.

Several more or less severe accidents have been

caused by them, and so numerous have they become that, within the past few months, several vessels belonging to our navy have gone "derelict cruising"—blowing up and sinking the most dangerous wrecks afloat in the North Atlantic.

At the time of the Silver Swan's reported loss, however, it was everybody's business to destroy the vessels, and therefore nobody's. At any time, however, the hull of the brig, reported by the steamship Montevideo as floating off Cuba, might be run into and sunk by some other vessel, such collisions being not at all uncommon.

Brandon Tarr realized that there was but a small chance of the Silver Swan being recovered, owing to these circumstances; yet he would not have been a Tarr had he not been willing to take the chance and do all he could to secure what he was quite convinced was a valuable treasure.

Derelicts had been recovered and towed into port for their salvage alone, and the Silver Swan was, he knew, richly laden. It might also be possible to repair the hull of the brig, for she was a well built craft, and if she had withstood the shock of being ground on the reef so well, she might even yet be made to serve for several years.

These thoughts flitted through the mind of the boy as he slowly crossed the wet fields toward the farm house.

"I'll go tomorrow morning—Uncle Arad or no Uncle Arad," he decided. "It won't do to leave the old fellow alone, so I'll step down after dinner and speak to Mrs. Hemingway about coming up here.

He will have to have her any way within a few days, so it won't much matter."

He didn't really know how to broach the subject to the old man, for he felt assured that his great uncle would raise manifold objections to his departure. He had lived at the farm four years now and Uncle Arad had come to depend on him in many ways.

They had eaten dinner — a most miserable meal — and Don was washing the dishes before he spoke.

"Uncle Arad," he said, trying to talk in a most matter of fact way, "now that father is — is gone and I have nothing to look forward to, I believe I'll strike out for myself. I'm past sixteen and big enough and old enough to look out for myself. I think I shall get along faster by being out in the world and brushing against folks, and I reckon I'll go to New York."

Uncle Arad fairly wilted into his seat, and stared at Don in utter surprise.

"Go to New York?" he gasped.

"That's what I said."

"Go to New York — jest when yer gittin' of some account ter me?"

"Oh, I've been of some account to you for some time, and any way father always paid my board before last fall, you know," said Don cheerfully.

Uncle Arad snorted angrily, and his eyes began to flash fire.

"Paid your board!" he exclaimed. "I dunno what put *that* inter your head."

"Father put it there, that's who," declared Don hotly.

"I never give him no receipts for board money," cried the old man. "You can't show a one!"

"I don't suppose you did," returned Don, with scorn. "You never give receipts for anything if you can help it. If you'd given receipts to your own brother as you ought, you wouldn't be in possession of this farm now."

"I wouldn't, hey?" cried the old man, goaded to desperation by this remark, which he knew only too well to be true. "You little upstart you! Ye'll go ter New York, whether 'r no, will ye?"

He arose in his wrath and shook his bony fist in Don's face. The youth looked down upon him scornfully, for the man would have been no match for him at all.

"Now don't have a fit," he said calmly. "I'm going to step 'round to Mrs. Hemingway's after dinner, and get her to come up here and look after you. You'll need her any way, in a few days."

"It won't matter! it won't matter!" shrieked Uncle Arad, exasperated by the boy's coolness. "It won't matter, I s'pose, when I hev ter pay three dollars—*three dollars*, mind ye—fur a hull week's extry work!"

He fairly stamped about the room in his fury.

"It don't matter, eh, when I'll have ter hire a man ter take your place? Be you crazy, Brandon Tarr?"

"Guess not," responded Don, wiping the last dish and hanging up the towel to dry. "You must think *me* crazy, however. Do you s'pose I'd stayed here this season without wages?"

"Wages!" again shrieked the old man, to whom the

thought of paying out a penny was positive pain. "Wages! an' you a beggar — yes, sir, a beggar! — 'pendent upon my bounty, as it were."

Don smiled at this.

"I'm a pretty sturdy beggar, as they used to call 'em in the old days," he said.

"Wal, any way, I'm your guardien, an' I'll see if you're goin' jest when you like."

Don laughed outright now.

"My guardian!" he responded. "I'd like to know *why* I should have any guardian. I've no property, goodness knows. And as you said about the board receipts, *where are your papers giving you any legal control over me?*"

The old man was utterly taken aback at this and sat down again, glowering at his nephew angrily, while the latter put on his hat and coat and departed on his errand to Mrs. Hemingway's.

But Arad Tarr was not the man to see either money or its equivalent slipping his grasp without strenuous efforts to retain it. His nephew represented to him just so much hard cash saved, for if Brandon went away Uncle Arad realized that the hiring of an extra hand would be an absolute necessity.

Therefore, the boy had not been gone long before the old man decided on a line of action. He struggled into his own coat, locked up the house, and harnessed a horse to a dilapidated light wagon. He was too careful of his good vehicles to take anything but this out on such a nasty day.

"That boy is a-gettin' too upstartish!" he declared, climbing into the wagon and chirruping to the

horse. "He's jest like Anson an' Horace. There was no livin' with *them*, an' now *he's* got this fool notion inter his head erbout goin' away!"

"But I'll git *that* aout o' him," he added, with emphasis. "If I hain't got no legal right ter his services, I *will* have, now I tell ye! Arter all I've done fur him an' fur his shif'less, no'count pa, I ain't goin' ter let go o' him till he comes of age—mos' five years yet."

He shook his head slowly at that thought. Five years of Brandon's services on the farm would be worth all of twenty-five hundred dollars!

He clucked to the horse and drove on the faster at that. Suppose the boy should take it into his head to go before he obtained the papers which he was sure he could have made out? The idea was quite agonizing.

"I reckon Squire Holt kin fix it up for me in short order," he muttered, as he urged his horse into a faster trot. "I'll show that boy 't he ain't his own master, by no means!"

CHAPTER VI

RELATING A MEETING BETWEEN UNCLE ARAD AND THE SAILOR

THE old man drove on through the mud and slush of the country road, the wheels of the rickety vehicle first rattling over outcropping rocks and boulders, and then splashing half way to their hubs in the yellow mire.

A mile beyond his own farm he turned into a broader highway which trended to the right — the city “pike.” Woods bordered the way on either side and although the rain had ceased, the drops fell in showers from the trees. It was a nasty day and the horse splashed itself to the belly with the mire.

Not many rods beyond the turn old Arad overtook a man walking in the same direction that he was driving, and as the farmer rattled up, the man stepped to one side and hailed him.

He was a bronzed and bearded fellow, dressed in garments about as seedy as the miser’s own clothing, and although he lacked all of twenty years of Arad’s age, his back, as he stood there beside the cart path, seemed almost as bent.

“Hullo, shipmate!” was the man’s greeting, raising his hand for the farmer to stop. “Goin’ toward the city?”

"Wal, I be a piece," replied Arad grudgingly.

It was something of an effort for him to speak civilly to a casual stranger. I presume he was afraid of wearing out the small stock of civility he possessed.

"Ye're goin' in ballast, I see," said the stranger. "Can't ye stow me away there?"

"Hey?" responded the farmer, who did not understand the other's figure of speech.

"I say ye're goin' in ballast," repeated the man; "yer wagon's empty, ye know. Give me a ride, will ye?"

"Wal, I dunno," said Arad slowly, with a sudden avaricious twinkle in his eye. "I know the team's empty, but th' mare ain't s' limber 's she might be, an' it's hard trav'lin'."

"Got an eye on the main chance, ain't ye, ye old land shark?" muttered the man. Then he said aloud: "How fur ye goin' on this road?"

"'Bout three mile furder."

"What'll ye take me that fur, for?"

"Wall, I dunno," began Arad.

"Come, I'll give ye a quarter," said the stranger, fishing a handful of silver from the depths of his pocket.

The old man's eyes flashed.

"Jump aboard," he said briefly, and the black bearded man sprang to the seat with great agility.

"Ye're some limber," said the old farmer, in admiration, pocketing the quarter and starting up his horse again.

"*You'd* be if ye'd shinned up as many riggin's as I hev."

"Ye're a sailor, then?"

"I be. No land lubber erbout me, is ther'? I reckon ye don't see many sailors in these parts?"

"Ya-as we do," snarled Arad impolitely; "more'n we wanter sometimes. I got a nevvy who was a sailor — a cap'n. Lost at sea erbout two months ergo. Lef' me er great, hulkin' boy ter take keer of."

"Great Peter!" exclaimed the sailor, with some astonishment. "Ye don't mean Cap'n Horace Tarr?"

"Yes, I do mean Cap'n Horace Tarr," growled Arad. "He was my nevvy, an' it's his no 'count, wuthless boy I've got on my han's. My name's Arad Tarr — n' th' only Tarr 't ever knew 'nough ter make money an' keep it."

The sailor looked at the weazened old figure curiously.

"He didn't favor you none," he said.

"Who didn't? Horace Tarr? I reckon he didn't!" exclaimed Arad. "He favored a ca'f more'n he did anything else, 'cordin' ter my notion. Did ye know him?" added the old man curiously.

"In course I did. I sailed with him — er — lots. Why, I was with him this 'ere las' v'y'ge o' his."

"Ye don't mean it!"

"I guess I do."

"Wal, wal!" exclaimed Uncle Arad, roused out of himself for a moment. "So you was on that raf' fur so long, eh? Must er been quite an experience. An' Horace is really dead, is he?"

"Dead's a door nail," the sailor declared. "Can't be no mistake erbout *that*. We had ter pitch him overboard — er — another feller and me; 'cause 'twas

so all fired hot, ye know. Him and Paulo Montez both went ter the sharks."

The old man shuddered.

"An' he died without leavin' a cent, eh? Poor's poverty! I allus knew how 'twould be. 'N' I s'pose Anson — fur he mus' be dead by this time — died poor, too."

The sailor looked at the old man sharply out of the corners of his eyes, and after a minute spoke again.

"Yes," he said slowly, in confirmation of Uncle Arad's remark. "I was with the cap'n at the last."

"What ye doin' 'way up here?" inquired the farmer, with sudden interest.

"Well, I come up ter see Cap'n Tarr's boy."

"Hey?" ejaculated the farmer. "Come ter see Brandon?"

"That's it," said the sailor, nodding

"But ye didn't see him?"

"Yes, I did; over yonder in the woods."

"Why, he didn't say nothin' erbout it ter me," gasped the old man.

"Mebbe ye ain't seen him since," suggested the sailor.

"When was yer er-talkin' with him?"

"Long erbout two hours back, 'r so."

"'Fore dinner?"

"I reckon so. I seen him over in the woods yonder, an' talked with him quite a spell. I started 'long back towards the city a'gin, but I found out I'd lost — er — somethin', an' went back ter hev er look fur it."

"What was it ye lost?" asked Uncle Arad, with

perhaps a momentary thought that, if it was of value and had been lost on his farm, he might be able to find it himself.

"Nothin' but a piece of paper."

"Find it?"

"Not me. Must ha' blowed away. Howsomever, that ain't ter the p'int. It's funny yer nevvy never tol' erbout meetin' me."

Old Arad was silent for a minute.

"I wish ye hadn't come 'round here, fillin' up his head with fool notions," he grumbled. "Seein' you must be what set him up ter leavin' so sudden."

"Goin' to leave ye, is he?" asked the sailor quickly.

"He *thinks* he is," returned the farmer, with a snarl. "Th' little upstart! But I'll l'arn him who's who, now I tell ye? Goin' ter New York, is he? Wal, I reckon not."

"To New York? What's he goin' there fur? I sh'd think ye'd want him right here on th' farm," said the sailor, with a cunning smile.

"So I do — an' right here is where he's goin' ter stay," declared Uncle Arad wrathfully. "I'm er — goin' down ter Square Holt's ter see erbout it now. I'm either goin' ter hev him bound ter me till he's twenty-one, 'r git p'inted him gardeen. *Then*, I reckon he won't talk no more erbout runnin' off ter New York."

"Yes, I reckon this place is the best fur a boy like him," acquiesced the sailor. "An' then, ye orter be his guardien. S'posin' he had prop'ty fallin' to him now — you'd orter hev th' handlin' of it till he's of age."

"Prop'ty! I guess ther' won't be none ter fall to

him," sniffed Uncle Arad. "I ain't a dyin' man. by no means, an' his pa didn't leave a cent. Didn't even hev that brig o' his'n insured."

"I dunno erbout that," said the sailor shrewdly.

"What don't ye know erbout?" demanded Arad suspiciously. "The Silver Swan wasn't insured, were she?"

"I reckon not."

"Then what d'ye mean?"

Arad's piercing eyes were fixed searchingly on his companion's face, but the sailor was not easily disturbed.

"Well, now, I'll put a case to ye — jest a s'posin' case, now mind ye," he said calmly, as Arad, now thoroughly interested in the matter, let the old horse walk along the muddy highway. "S'posin' now this 'ere Cap'n Tarr had knowed erbout a buried treasure, 'r some sich thing, an' he'd writ erbout it, an' give the papers ter another man — his mate, fur instance — ter be given ter his son.

"Now, nat'rally, if ther' was any money in it fur this Brandon, *you'd* orter know erbout it, hadn't ye? You bein' th' boy's guardian, *you'd* orter handle that money; un' if *I* could help you ter the gettin' o' that money, *I'd* orter hev a part of it, eh?"

Old Arad stared at him with wide open eyes, and the hand which held the reins trembled visibly.

"Now, s'posin' the mate sends them papers to Brandon through the mail, 'r writes a letter erbout 'em — *you'd* orter know it, hadn't ye? You'd orter see that letter, or them papers, an' *you'd* jest drop me a line, an' *I* c'd help ye get 'em, 'cause I know all

erbout sich things, bein' a sea farin' man fur thirty year."

Uncle Arad moistened his trembling lips before he could speak.

"But this is only s'posin'," he said quaveringly.

"But, *s'pose 'twas so!* S'pose I seen them papers passed, an' s'pose I heered Cap'n Tarr say with his own lips ther' was 'nough suthin 'r other (I couldn't ketch th' word — gold, mebbe) there ter make a man fabuously rich?"

"Fabulously rich!" repeated Arad.

"That's it; fabulously rich, is wot he said. An' if it's so, *you* orter to get the letters from the post office, an' open every one of 'em, hadn't ye?"

Uncle Arad nodded quickly.

"O course ye had; and if the letter or papers sh'd come from Caleb Wetherbee — that's the mate's name; he's in the 'orspital yet — you'd let me know, an' then we'd see wot we sh'd see, eh?"

The sailor poked the old man familiarly in the ribs and slapped his own knee.

"That's wot we'd do, shipmate," he said. "Wot say ye? Ye'll need me, fur I reckon wherever th' money's hid, ye'll need a sailor ter go 'long with ye — er ter git it fur ye."

"I — I couldn't go; my health ain't good 'nough," declared the farmer. "Then — then — mebbe there ain't nothin' in it."

"Well, mebbe there ain't," said the sailor calmly, preparing to dismount as the old man pulled up before a house; "an' then ag'in mebbe there is. Leastways, I adwise ye ter jest keep yer eyes open fur let-

ters f'om New York. An' when one comes from Caleb Wetherbee, p'r'aps ye'll want ter talk with me furder."

"Where—where kin I find ye?" Arad asked, in a shaking voice.

"Jest write ter Jim Leroyd, New England Hotel, Water Street, New York—that'll fetch me," declared the sailor briskly. "Now remember, old feller," he added meaningly, "ye won't be able ter do nothin' with them papers 'thout me. If ye try it ye'll be up a stump ter onct. Now, take keer o' yerself!"

He turned away and rolled along the road toward the distant city, while Uncle Arad climbed down from the wagon.

"Fabulously rich!" he muttered to himself, as he fastened the horse to the hitching post with trembling hands.

CHAPTER VII

INTRODUCING "SQUARE" HOLT AND HIS OPINIONS

"SQUARE" HOLT, who was a justice of the peace as well as the judge of the probate court of the town, was a very tall and very angular individual with a massive development of nose (old Arad Tarr's was as nothing beside it) and a wide mouth continually drawn into a grim line, as though such a thing as a smile had never crossed his imagination — if, indeed, he had an imagination.

He had no children of his own (which was an exceedingly fortunate thing for the unborn generations) and had apparently forgotten his own boyhood. Boys, in his estimation, were made to work — the harder the better. In this he was of the same opinion as Uncle Arad Tarr.

Old Arad was at once admitted to the front parlor of the house at which he had stopped, which was used by the judge as his office when he was not at the town hall. Here, seated in one of the prim hair cloth chairs, with which his soiled and badly fitting garments hardly harmonized, the old man told his story.

"That boy, square, comes o' the shif'lessest kind o' stock, ye know, ef his gran'father *was* my own brother," he said, in conclusion. "You 'member Ezra?"

"Oh yes, I remember Ezra," said the judge, grimly.

"Wal, then, ye know what a shif'less loose j'nted critter he was in business matters, an' Anson an' Horace was as like him as two peas aout o' the same pod. An' now this 'ere Brandon hez got th' same traits o' no 'count shif'lessness."

"Very likely, very likely," said the other, with sternness. "I've seen the youth, I think, out gunning quite frequently — a most objectionable practice."

"Ye're right, square," old Arad exclaimed, with eagerness. "Jest er firin' erway good powder an' shot 't cost money. Thet boy hez airnt money er-helpin' of the neighbors lots o' times, ter waste on powder an' shot. He's a dretful bad boy."

"From what you say, neighbor," said the judge, with confidence, "I should say that the proper place for the young rascal was the State reform school _____"

"Oh, no, no, square," exclaimed Arad, in sudden terror at the thought of losing Don's services in this way. "'Tain't as bad as that. I kin manage him, once give me legal 'thority."

"Ye see, his pa left him 'ithout a cent, an' I thought it didn't make a bit er diff'rance 'bout his havin' a guardeen — 'twould er been some expense, ye know, ter hev th' papers made aout; but since he's got this 'ere wild goose notion o' leavin' me, I begin ter see that I sh'd hev some holt on him fur — hem! — fur his own good, as it were."

"Quite right," declared the judge confidently. "And so the boy — this Brandon — proposes to go away at once, does he?"

"So he has th' audacity ter tell me," responded old Arad. "He declared he was goin' termorrer mornin'. Ye know, square, I'm too broke up 'ith the rheumatiz ter tackle him as he'd orter be tackled. A good hidin' would be th' best thing fur him, in *my* 'pinion."

"And in my opinion, too," quoth the judge. "Now, of course this matter will have to be done when the court meets next week, Mr. Tarr; but I'll come up and see the youth tonight, and I think that between us we can make him see that this is the place for him to stay, and that there is to be no running away from it," and the judge shut his thin lips together very grimly.

"That's it, square; thank 'ee," said the old man, shambling out of the house. "Dretful weather we been havin', ain't it?"

Then he climbed into his wagon and drove back toward home, chuckling as he went.

"I reckon I've put a spoke in *his* wheel," he muttered, referring to his nephew.

As he pursued his homeward way, however, thoughts of the sailor with whom he had so recently conversed, and of that conversation itself, filled his mind.

"I don't persume that ther's anythin' in it," he muttered, thoughtfully stroking the wisp of beard on his pointed chin. "Horace Tarr never had no luck no-how, an' I don't see how he'd come ter know anythin' erbout this 'ere treasure. P'raps that sailor was jest a yarnin' ter me."

Still, the old man could not drive the thought out of his mind.

"Fabulously rich!" he repeated. "That's what he heard Horace say. This 'ere mate of the Silver Swan was a chum er Horace's, like 'nough, an' I s'pose if ther' *is* anythin' in it, he'll jes' try ter git it himself. An' then — er — Brandon'll never see a cent of it.

"It really is my duty ter look aout fur th' boy's int'rest," continued the old hypocrite. "'F I'm goin' ter be his guardeen, I'd orter know what's goin' on; an' this *may* mean money fur — fur Brandon."

He wiped his wrinkled brow with a soiled handkerchief, the reins lying idly on his knee the while. Somehow, despite the chilliness of the day, the perspiration stood in great drops upon his forehead.

"S'posin'," he thought, "ther' should be a letter at Sam Himes' fur him now, f'om that Wetherbee feller? 'Twouldn't no way do fur a boy ter git letters that his guardeen didn't know nothin' erbout, an' ther' ain't no doubt thet, if Brandon got it, he wouldn't show it ter me. I — I b'lieve I'll drive 'round that way an' see."

He touched up the mare again and, upon reaching the forks of the road, turned to the north once more and drove along the ridge until he reached a little gambrel roofed cottage on the westerly side of the highway.

This was the post office where Sam Himes held forth, and to which the lumbering old stage brought one mail each day.

Here he dismounted from the wagon again, and went into the house, being greeted at the door by the customary "Haow air ye?" of the postmaster.

"I was jes' thinkin' er sendin' daown ter your haouse, Arad," declared the postmaster, who was no respecter of persons, and called everybody by his first name, being familiar with them from the nature of his calling. "Here's a letter fur yeou an' one fur th' boy — Don."

He thrust two missives into the old man's hand, and Arad stumbled out to his wagon again, his fingers shaking with excitement. Glancing at the two envelopes he recognized one at once, and clutched it avariciously. It was from a brokerage firm in New York, and contained his monthly dividend for certain investments which he had made.

The other letter, however, he did not look at until he had turned his horse about and started her jogging along toward home again. Then he drew forth the envelope and studied it carefully.

It was addressed in a big, scrawling hand to: "Master Brandon Tarr, Chopmist, Rhode Island," yet, despite the plainness of the address, old Arad, after a hasty and half fearful glance around, broke the seal and drew forth the inclosed page.

He looked first at the signature, and finding it to be "Caleb Wetherbee," he began to peruse the epistle, looking up from time to time to glance along the road, that nobody might catch him in the act of reading the letter intended only for his nephew's eye.

Uncle Arad's sight was not so keen for written words as it once had been, but he managed to stumble through the document, which read as follows:

NEW YORK MARINE HOSPITAL,
April the 2d, 1892.

MASTER BRANDON TARR.

SIR:—As I am laid up in dry dock, as you might say, and can't get up to see you right off as I promised your poor father, I am taking the first chance these swabs of doctors have given me, to write this.

Me and another man was all that was saved off the raft, as you probably know now, for your father was hurt so bad that there wasn't any chance for him. He died ten days after we left the brig.

I want you should pack up your togs, leave that farm where no son of Captain Horace Tarr ought to dig all his life, and come down here to New York to see me. I shall be out of this hospital before long, and then we've got some work to do, like I promised your father before he died.

Captain Tarr put some papers in my hands which is of great value, providing they can be used at once. It seems your uncle Anson died several months ago in Kimberley, South Africa, and while he was at Cape Town loading up the brig, a fellow come aboard and told your father about it, and brought these papers.

Among the papers (though the fellow didn't know it, so I understood from the few words poor Captain Tarr let drop) was a package of diamonds which he hid aboard the old brig, and was afraid to take with him on the raft for fear of the sailors that was with us. These papers I've got he said would tell where the diamonds was hid. I ain't opened them yet, so I don't know.

Now you may think this here is no use because the Silver Swan is wrecked; but I don't believe she has gone to pieces yet; nor your father didn't think she would right off. We would have done better by sticking to her, any way, I reckon. She was driv upright onto the reef, and I'll bet she's sticking there yet.

If you come down here to once, and I can get onto my old timber leg again, we'll charter a boat and go down there and see about it. If it is as your father said—and I believe it—

there's enough of them diamonds to make you another Vanderbilt or Jay Gould.

Just you leave the land shark of an uncle that you're staying with, and trust yourself to

Your true friend,

CALEB WETHERBEE,
Mate of the Silver Swan.

CHAPTER VIII

SOMETHING ABOUT LEAVING THE FARM

CERTAINLY Uncle Arad Tarr had never been so filled with astonishment in his life as he was upon reading the letter of the mate of the Silver Swan to the captain's son.

Diamonds enough to make Brandon a second Vanderbilt! The thought almost made Arad's old heart stand still.

"Who'd er-thought it — who'd ever er-thought it?" he muttered weakly, folding the letter once more, and thrusting it into the pocket of his patched coat.

Then he picked up the reins and drove on, shaking his head slowly.

"Diamonds enough ter make him rich!" he murmured, with an avaricious contortion of his face. "Jest ter think o' Anson Tarr ever gittin' more'n his bread and butter. It don't seem ter me he c'd ha' got 'em honest."

He was very ready now, considering the guilty thoughts there were in his own heart, to declare the fortune gained by his nephew Anson to be dishonestly obtained.

"It jest stands ter reason," he went on, "that this 'ere Caleb Wetherbee isn't er — er trustworthy person to hev charge o' Brandon — or them di'monds either.

I mus' hev them papers made out jes' as soon as th' square kin do it, an' then I kin find that 'ere wreck — er hev it found — m'self."

His mind at once reverted to Jim Leroyd, the sailor with whom he had entered into a compact to "divide the spoils," and he shook his head again doubtfully.

"He ain't jes' th' man I'd er chosen ter do th' work fur me," muttered the old sinner; "but then, he's the old sailor I know, an' it's got ter take a sailor, I s'pose, ter go ter them furrin parts.

"He knows suthin' erbout it already, too, an' it wouldn't do ter let him git mad an' go an' tell this 'ere Wetherbee; then mebbe I couldn't git th' papers from him. But th' fust thing is ter hev thet 'p'intment as guardien fixed up."

Brandon was in the yard when he arrived, and good naturedly put up the horse for him.

"I've seen Mrs. Hemingway, uncle," he said cheerfully, "and she'll be up here tomorrow morning. I shall take the stage to town in the morning, and go to New York on the evening train, I guess."

"Ye will, eh?" returned Uncle Arad, showing his teeth.

"Yes. Now you mustn't get uppish, uncle. You didn't suppose I would stay here very long any way, did you?"

"I s'pect ye'll stay here a spell," replied the old man, with a cunning leer. "I ain't fed an' su'ported ye in lux'ry fur nigh four year fur nothin'. Ye'll stay here as my ward fur yer minor'ty, now I tell ye."

But Brandon was laughing over the thought of

Uncle Arad's "luxury," and did not hear the last of his speech.

He did the most of the chores about the house and barn, as was usual, and helped prepare the extremely frugal meal which Uncle Arad's larder afforded.

"By George!" he thought, as he set about this latter task, "if I was in the forecastle of some old 'hooker' I shouldn't have worse fare than this. I declare I'll go off tomorrow before breakfast. This will be my last meal at Uncle Arad's table for one spell at least."

But he said nothing further about going away, knowing that it would only anger the old man. Before the dishes were cleared away after the meal, there was the sound of wheels at the gate, and in a moment somebody knocked sharply.

Old Arad himself arose and hobbled to the door, admitting "Square" Holt into the miserable den of a kitchen. If it had been the President himself, the old man would not have opened the "best room."

"Go aout an' take the square's hoss 'roun' ter the shed," harshly commanded Uncle Arad, and Brandon did as he was bidden, vaguely suspecting that something was brewing.

When he came into the kitchen again after doing the errand, the parrot beaked judge was ready for him.

"Young man," began the judge severely, "your uncle, Mr. Tarr, who has done so much for you for the past four years, tells me that you have made a sorry return for all his kindness and bounty."

"In what?" demanded Brandon rather sharply, for

he considered this interference on the justice's part as wholly uncalled for.

"Is that the way you speak to your elders, young man?" cried the judge, aghast. "Have you no respect for gray hairs?"

"I do not see why I should respect *you*, Mr. Holt," replied Don, with some temper. "You've never given me cause to and I consider that your questions and remarks are entirely unwarranted. I propose to go away from my uncle's house (to whom, by the way, my father paid three dollars per week board for me up to last fall, and for whom I have done the work of a regularly hired hand during most of the time I have been here) I propose to go away, I say, and nothing *you* or uncle can say will stop me!"

"Houghty toughty, young man!" cried the judge; "do you realize to whom you are speaking?"

"Yes, I do," responded Brandon hotly. "To one who is known, far and wide, as the meanest man in Scituate!"

The judge's ample nasal organ flushed to the color of a well grown beet; but before he could reply old Arad put in *his* oar:

"What d'ye mean, ye little upstart?" (Fancy his calling Brandon *little*, who already stood a good three inches taller than himself!) "What d'ye mean, sayin' that I was ever paid fur yer keep? Ye've been nuthin' but an expense an' trouble ter me ever since ye come here."

"That's an untruth, and you know it," declared Don, who had quite lost his temper by this time, and did not behave himself in just the manner I should

have preferred my hero to behave; but Brandon Tarr was a very human boy, and, I have found, heroes are much like other folks and not by any means perfect.

"Young man, mark my words!" sputtered "Square" Holt, "you will yet come to some bad end."

"I'll git all this aout o' ye, afore I'm done with ye, Brandon Tarr," declared Uncle Arad, "if I hev ter hire somebody ter lick ye."

"You wouldn't do that — you're too stingy to hire anybody to 'lick' me," responded Don tartly. "Now I don't propose to listen to any more of this foolishness. I'm going away, and I'm going away tomorrow morning. I've eaten my last meal at this house, Uncle Arad!"

"Is that the way to speak to your guardian?" said the judge, with horror in his tone. "Mr. Tarr, you are too lenient with this young scoundrel. He should be sent to the State reform school as I suggested."

"But then I wouldn't get no work aout o' him," the farmer hastened to say. "I — I've got ter git the money back I've spent on him, ye know."

Brandon laughed scornfully.

"I should like to know by what right you call him my guardian, Mr. Holt?" he asked.

"Wal, I'm goin' ter be yer guardien — right off," Arad hastened to inform him, before the "square" could reply. "The square 's goin' ter make the papers aout ter onces."

"They'll be funny looking documents, I reckon," said Don, in disgust. "I understand that Mr. Holt

has done several pretty crooked things since he's been in office, but this is going a little too far."

"Young man!" cried the judge, trying to wither the audacious youth with a glance.

But Don didn't "wither" at all.

"If you know anything at all about law," he said to the judge, with sarcasm, "you know that a guardian can't be appointed in an hour. Legal notice must be given and reason shown *why* a guardian should be appointed. I've no property, and Uncle Arad only wants to control me so as to have my work. And, besides all that, I am old enough to choose my own guardian, and you can bet your last cent that I shouldn't choose Arad Tarr."

"It ain't so! 'tain't no sich thing, is it, square?" cried old Arad, in alarm. "Ain't I th' proper person to be 'p'nted over my own nevvy? Ther' ain't nobody else got anythin' ter do with it."

"He can tell you what he likes," responded Brandon quickly; "but I've given you the facts. Now I've heard enough of this, and I'm going to bed." Then he added, turning to Holt: "When you go out to fleece a lamb next time, Mr. Holt, be pretty sure that the lamb is just as innocent as you think it."

He turned away without another word then and left the kitchen, mounting to his bedroom in the second story of the old house, leaving the baffled conspirators in a state of wrathful bewilderment.

CHAPTER IX

ANOTHER LETTER FROM NEW YORK

"MR. TARR," declared the judge, when Brandon had, for the moment, so successfully routed them and retired, "you are doing a very wrong thing in shielding that young reprobate from the reform school. That's where he belongs. Send him there, sir, send him there!"

"I never thought he'd ha' shown disrespect fur the law," gasped Uncle Arad weakly.

"Disrespect!" cried the judge, "I never was so insulted in all my life. That boy will be hung yet, you mark my words!"

"I never thought it of Brandon," said the farmer, shaking his head.

He seemed quite overcome to think that his nephew had dared defy the law, or its representative. To Uncle Arad the law was a very sacred thing; he always aimed to keep within its pale in his transactions.

"You'll never be able to do anything with that boy here," declared "Square" Holt. "A strait jacket is the only thing for him."

"But if he goes there what'll be the use o' my bein' his guardien?" queried Arad.

Then he hesitated an instant as a new phase of the situation came to him.

"If Brandon was under lock an' key — jes' where I c'd put my han' on him when I wanted him — I c'd go right erbout this 'ere treasure business, an' git it fur — fur *him*," he thought, yet shivering in his soul at the thought of the wrong he was planning to do his nephew.

"I — I dunno but ye're right, square," he said quaveringly. "I — I don' wanter see th' boy go right ter perdition, 'fore my very eyes, as ye might say, an' if ye think the reformin' influences o' the institu-tion is what he needs — — —"

"The best thing in the world for him," declared the judge, drawing on his driving gloves. "The *only* thing, I might say, that will keep him out of jail — where he belongs, the young villain!"

"But — but haow kin it be fixed up?" asked Arad, in some doubt.

"You leave that to me," said the judge pompously. "I'll show that young reprobate that he has defied the wrong man when he defies *me*. I'll give him all the law he wants — more, perhaps, than he bargained for."

"But s'pose he tries to run away in th' mornin', as he threatened?"

"All you've got to do, Mr. Tarr," said the judge, shaking one long finger at the farmer, "is to keep a close watch on that young man. Don't give him a chance to run away. Lock him into his room tonight and keep him there till we can — er, hem! — straighten this out. I think it will be a very easy matter to place the case before the court in such manner that the

necessity for immediate action will be at once admitted.

"Why," declared the judge, warming up to his subject, "I wonder, sir, how you—an old man" (Uncle Arad winced at that), "and in feeble health—have been able to remain here alone with that young scoundrel all this winter. I wonder that he has not laid violent hands on you."

"Wal, he *has* been some abusive, square, but I wouldn't say nothin' erbout that," said Uncle Arad hesitatingly.

"Don't compound villainy by shielding it," responded the judge, with righteous indignation. "This matter has already gone too far. When our quiet town is to be aroused and made a scene of riot, such as has been enacted—er—*here* tonight, sir, it is time something was done. Such young hoodlums as this Brandon Tarr should be shut up where they will do no harm to either their friends or neighbors.

"If I had *my* way," added the judge viciously, "I'd shut up every boy in town in the reform school!"

Then he marched out to his carriage, and Uncle Arad, after locking the door, sat down to think the matter over.

If he was successful in his nefarious plan of shutting Brandon up in the reformatory institution of the State, the getting of the diamonds, which Captain Tarr had hidden aboard the Silver Swan, would be all plain sailing.

Of course he would have to lose Brandon's work on the farm; but he had seen, by the boy's open defiance of "Square" Holt, that he cared nothing for

the law or its minion — and Uncle Arad dared not allow his nephew out of his sight for fear he would run away.

To *his* mind there was very little doubt that the attempt to shut Brandon up would be successful. Judge Holt was a most powerful man (politically) in the town, and he would leave no stone unturned to punish the youth who had so fearlessly defied him.

Judge Holt, although disliked by many of his townsmen who realized that some of his methods and actions were illegal, still swayed the town on election days, and carried things with a high hand the remainder of the year. Old Arad chuckled to think how easily Brandon's case would be settled by the doughty "square."

Then, remembering the suggestion the judge had made just before his departure, he rose hastily from his chair and quietly ascended to the floor above. Here Brandon and himself slept in two small bedrooms on opposite sides of the hall.

The doors were directly opposite each other, and, although such things as locks were unknown in the house on any except the outside doors, the old man quickly lit upon a scheme that he thought remarkably clever.

He obtained a piece of stout clothes line and fastened it back and forth from handle to handle of the two bedroom doors, which, opening into their respective rooms, were now arranged so that the occupants of neither apartment could open the portals.

Then, chuckling softly over his sharp trick, the old farmer crept down the stairs once more to the kitchen,

feeling moderately sure of finding Brandon in his room in the morning.

But one narrow window, looking out upon the barnyard, was in his nephew's apartment, and as the sash had long since been nailed in, and the shutters closed on the outside, Uncle Arad felt secure on this score.

"I'll starve him inter submission, ef I can't do it no other way," he muttered angrily.

Seating himself once more in his old armchair, he drew forth the two letters obtained that day at the post office, adjusted his steel bowed spectacles which, in a moment of extravagance, he had purchased of a traveling peddler, and opened the epistle from his brokers which, heretofore, he had not read.

He slit the envelope carefully with the blade of his jack knife. More than one man had torn or otherwise mutilated a check by opening an envelope too carelessly.

But instead of the printed form and generous draft which was the usual monthly inclosure of the firm, all the envelope contained was a typewritten letter, which the old farmer read with something like horror:

Office of
BENSELL, BENSELL & MARSDEN,
513 Wall St., New York,
April 2, 1892.

MR. ARAD TARR,
CHOPMIST, RHODE ISLAND.

Dear Sir:

We beg to announce that owing to several accidents, causing a large loss of rolling stock of the road, the B. P. & Q.

has dropped several points on the market and has passed its monthly dividend.

We would suggest that you hold on to your stock, however, as this is a matter which will quickly adjust itself.

Yours sincerely,

BENSELL, BENSELL & MARSDEN.

The letter fluttered to the floor from Uncle Arad's nerveless fingers. To lose money was like losing his very life, and this was no inconsiderable sum that had gone. He had invested a large amount in B. P. & Q. stock, and up to the present time it had paid large interest.

"Them brokers air thieves! I know they be," cried the old man, breaking forth into vituperations against the innocent firm of Bensell, Bensell & Marsden. "Ye can't trust 'em — not an inch! I don't b'lieve none o' their lyin' stories erbout the railroad's passin' its div'dend. I — I'll go ter New York m'self, I declare I will!"

He got up and paced the floor wrathfully.

"Jes' as soon as I git this matter o' Brandon's settled, an' git th' farm work started with Jim Hemin-way fur foreman, I'll go. I ain't ergoin' ter be cheated bare faced like this 'ere."

Then he thought a moment, and pulling Caleb Wetherbee's letter from its envelope again, read it once more carefully.

"I — I might look inter this w'ile I was there too," he muttered slowly. "I reckon I kin fin' thet feller I saw terday — Leroyd, his name was, an' his address was New England Hotel, Water Street. I shan't furgit thet right off."

He shook his head slowly, thrust both letters into his pocket, and then shambled off to bed in the room off the kitchen as, having locked his nephew in, he had also locked himself *out* of his usual bed chamber.

CHAPTER X

BRANDON'S ARRIVAL AT THE METROPOLIS

LONG habit had made Uncle Arad Tarr an extremely early riser, and it had been his custom to arouse Brandon as early as half past three or four during the summer months, and never later than five-thirty in winter. On the morning after he had fastened the door of his nephew's room, however, the old man did not seek to disturb the boy, but rising himself before five he went about the customary duties of the house and barn.

In this work he missed Brandon sadly; but having made up his mind that the boy was bound to leave him any way, old Arad was determined that he should go to the reform school, and therefore he would have to learn to do without his valuable services.

To his unsophisticated mind, it seemed a very simple matter indeed for a powerful local politician like "Square" Holt to send his nephew to the State reformatory institution, "and no questions asked."

But under our present system of humane laws, and with our enlightened legal executives, an undeserved incarceration in prison or reform school is seldom known — outside of story books. Judge Holt was a large man in his own community (and in his own esti-

mation) but he had never been beyond that community far enough to learn how very small a man he really was.

After the arduous labor of feeding the stock and poultry, drawing water and bringing in wood, old Arad hardly felt equal to either the task of preparing breakfast, or eating the same; but he did at last sit down to what he termed "a cold snack" about seven o'clock.

"That 'ere boy sleeps like a pig," he muttered, with a groan, twisting about in his chair to get an easy position for his rheumatic limbs. "I wonder he hain't begun er-kickin' on th' door, er suthin', yit."

At that moment there was a noise behind him, and turning about he beheld the subject of his thoughts standing in the doorway leading to the floor above.

Uncle Arad gave a shout expressing surprise and anger, and sprang to his feet. Brandon had been surveying him coolly, with a smile on his face, and now he laughed outright.

"Good morning, uncle," he said.

He was fully dressed in his best suit, hat, overcoat and all, and carried a traveling bag in his hand.

"How — how did ye git aout?" sputtered Uncle Arad, in wonder.

"How did I get out?"

"Yes — haow did ye git aouto' yer room?" cried the old man.

"I wasn't in, therefore I didn't have to get out," responded Brandon calmly.

"Ye warn't in?" repeated his bewildered relative.

"That's what I said. I wasn't in. When you

crawled up stairs last night and took all that trouble with the clothes line, I wasn't in my room at all. I expected some such delicate attention as that on your part, uncle, so I took the trouble to remove my things to the spare room at the other end of the hall, and slept there."

The farmer fairly gnashed his teeth in rage.

"Where be yeou goin'?" he demanded, planting himself between his nephew and the door.

"Why, uncle, I thought you knew that," said Brandon, raising his eyebrows in apparent surprise. "I told you last night that I was going to New York. I haven't changed my mind since then, though I've modified my plans somewhat. It's such a pleasant morning, I believe I'll walk down to Rockland, take the stage from there to Hope, and go to town on the train."

"Yeou will, hey? Wal, I guess not!"

Old Arad backed up against the door as though to guard that way of escape. His lean form was trembling with excitement, and he was really in a pitiable state for so old a man.

"Think not, eh?" said Brandon coolly.

He came into the kitchen and deposited his traveling bag on a chair, and then stepped across the room and took his rifle down from the two hooks upon which it rested.

Old Arad uttered a shout of alarm and darted away from the door to the opposite side of the table.

"Goodness me! would you shoot me?" he gasped, fairly white to his lips.

"Don't be a fool, uncle," responded Brandon with

asperity, opening the hall door again and bringing in a gun case which had been standing in the corner of the other apartment. "The rifle isn't loaded, and, besides, what do you suppose I'd want to shoot you for?"

"Oh, you young villain, you!" groaned old Arad, paying for his agile movements of the moment before by several rheumatic twinges.

"Thanks! Well, uncle, I guess I'll be off. I don't suppose you'll shake hands with a fellow?" and Brandon stopped, with his hand on the door latch.

"I'll have ye a'rested afore ye git ter Rockland!" the old man shouted, shaking his clenched fist at him.

"You'd better not try it," the boy declared, with flashing eyes.

Arad followed him outside, sputtering.

"Ye'll live ter rue this day, ye young villain!" he cried. "I'll show ye no mercy."

"All right; it's all the same to me," Brandon returned, and whistling cheerfully, he went out of the gate and started down the road with his burden of traveling bag and gun case.

It was a beautiful morning, despite the rain of the day before. True, there were puddles of muddy water standing in the road and patches of dirty snow in the fence corners and under the hedges. But these drawbacks did not serve to cloud either the clear azure sky or Brandon's bright hopes.

Looking back at the old farm house once, before turning the bend in the road, he had a glimpse of old Arad driving furiously out of the yard.

"He is going to see his familiar spirit, Holt," mut-

tered Don, with a smile, "and lots of good may it do him. I'll be in town before they catch me, and Judge Ebenezer Holt isn't anywhere near as big a man in town as he is here. I'll risk all the harm they can do me now."

He arrived at Rockland in time for the stage to Hope, and at the latter village took the train for Providence. Neither his uncle nor Holt had appeared, and he made up his mind that he was well rid of them.

Once aboard the cars he settled himself back in his seat, and drew forth the scrap of newspaper which had dropped from the old sailor's note case the day before. He read it through again carefully.

"I've got nearly fifty dollars (wouldn't uncle be crazy if he knew it?) and although that isn't a fortune, still it ought to keep me for some time," he thought. "But, the question is, after I pump all I can out of that Wetherbee, what had I better do?"

He mused a moment in silence, and then took up the connected train of his reflections again.

"Fifty dollars ought to last me quite a spell — and take me quite a way, too. Of course, I can't hire a boat in New York to go in search of the Silver Swan with it; but I can watch the Hydrographic Office reports, and find out in what general direction the brig's headed. Then I'll get as near to her as possible and see — what I shall see!"

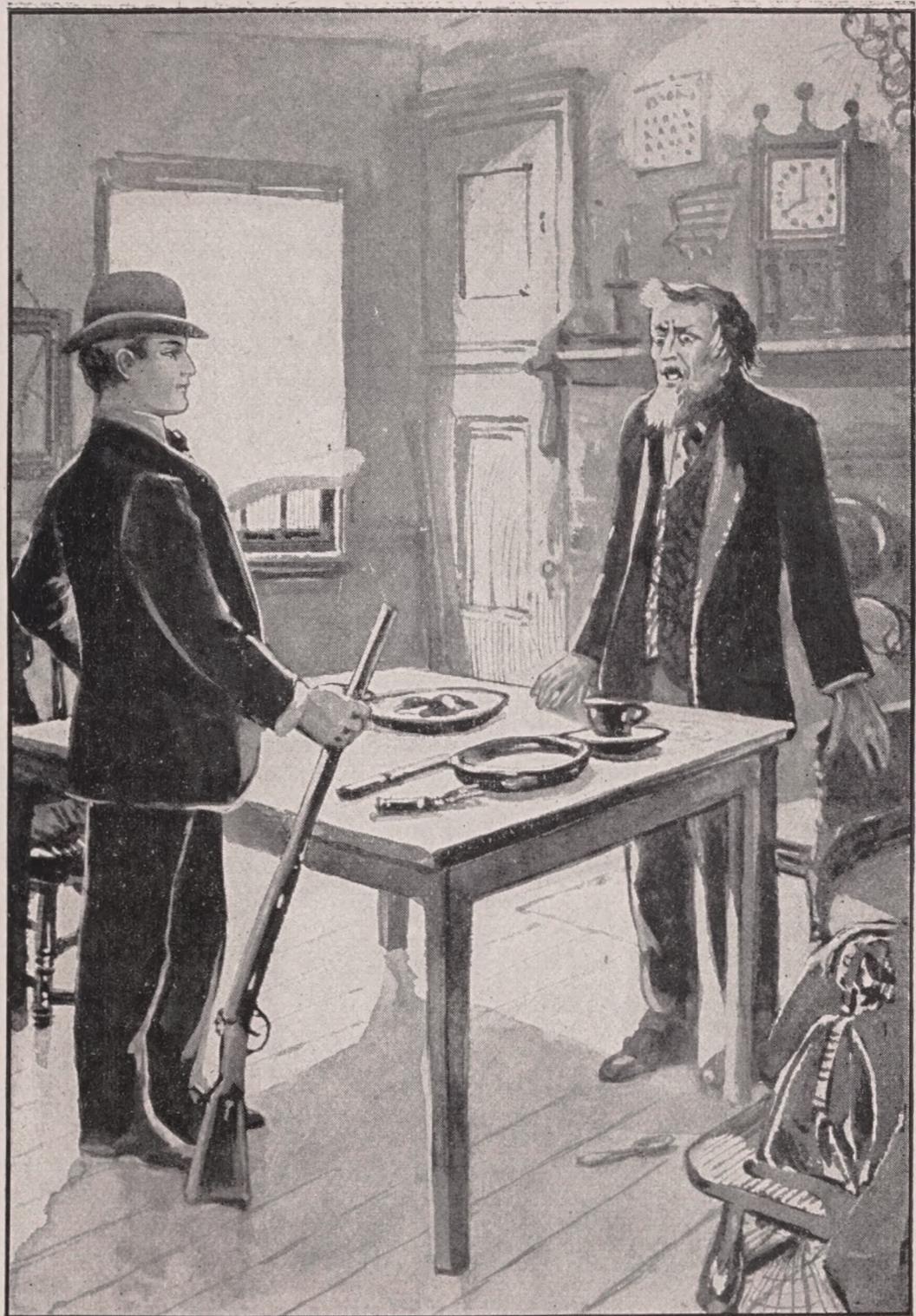
"I'd give a cent" (probably he would have given a good deal more) "if this Wetherbee was a different sort of a man. It's a mystery to me how father ever trusted the fellow. I always supposed that

father had a keen insight into human nature; but a man will be deceived at times, I suppose.

"But I won't let this treasure idea keep me from going to work, and working hard, too. If I don't get the money, why I don't want to be roaming about the world like Uncle Anson, with nothing to do in life but hunt for wealth. I believe I'll get a place on some vessel any way, for there's a good deal of the sailor in me as there was in father. We get it from grandfather's folks — the Brandons — I suppose."

He arrived at Providence before noon, and spent the time until evening in looking about the business portion of the city, and especially about the wharves. Then late in the afternoon he took the cars for New York, arriving in the metropolis at such an hour that to go to a hotel near the station seemed necessary.

Although a country boy by bringing up, Brandon was not easily disturbed by the magnitude of life in the great city. In fact, he rather enjoyed it, and after retiring to his room at the hotel, he went to sleep without one apprehensive thought of what the morrow might bring forth.



“GOODNESS ME! WOULD YOU SHOOT ME?”

The Quest of the Silver Swan

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRM OF ADONIRAM PEPPER & CO.

LEAVING his bag and gun case at the hotel, Brandon Tarr started out by nine o'clock on the following morning, his first aim being to find and interview the sailor who had already visited Chopmist for the purpose of seeing him.

"Caleb Wetherbee, New England Hotel, Water Street," was the address, and after considerable inquiry he found the street in question.

It was, however, the Battery end of it and no one seemed to know anything about the New England Hotel. Still, Don was not dismayed and pursued his way, keeping his eyes open and himself alert among the many new sights and sounds of the metropolis.

The locality grew worse as he pursued his way, but he was not to be frightened off by gangs of street gamins, or crowds of half drunken men. Still, in these days, Water Street isn't as bad as it was once — at least, not by daylight.

As he wandered along he could see down the cross streets to the wharves and water beyond, where all sorts and conditions of seagoing craft were gathered from all parts of the world. He sniffed the sea breeze, too, which, to him, killed all the odor of the filth about him.

"That's what I want to be — a sailor," he muttered.

Just then something caught his eye and he stopped motionless on the sidewalk.

On the opposite side of the street (the river side) as though crowded off Front Street by its more pretentious neighbors, was the office of a shipping firm. It was in a low brick building, dingy and dirty as were the structures about it, and a much battered sign over the door read:

ADONIRAM PEPPER & CO.,
SHIPPING MERCHANTS.

The name was what attracted Brandon's attention first. He had heard his father speak of it and of the man who was "Adoniram Pepper & Co." and from his description he had a desire to see this eccentric personage.

Perhaps, also, Mr. Pepper would know the locality of the New England Hotel, and therefore Brandon crossed the street and entered the dingy little front office.

On a high stool by a high desk just beside the window, sat a man with a wonderful development of leg, a terrific shock of the reddest hair imaginable, and a shrewd, lean face, lit up by sharp, foxy eyes. His face was smoothly shaven and the yellow skin was covered with innumerable wrinkles like cracks in the cheeks of a wax doll; but whether this individual was twenty five, or fifty five, Brandon was unable to guess.

The man (a clerk, presumably) looked up with a snarl at Brandon's appearance.

"Well, what do *you* want?" he demanded.

“Is the firm in?” asked Don, almost laughing in the other’s face, for the red haired clerk had a huge daub of ink on the bridge of his nose and another on his shirt front.

“*I’m* the firm just now,” declared the man, glowering at him as though he was a South Sea Islander with cannibalistic tendencies.

“Oh, you are, eh?” returned Brandon. “Well, I want to see Mr. Pepper.”

“You do, eh?” The clerk eyed him with still greater disfavor. “You do, eh? Well you can’t see Mr. Pepper.”

“Why not?”

“Well, for one reason he isn’t here — he ain’t down yet — he’s gone away — he’s *dead!*”

He slammed down his pen and jumped off the high stool.

“Git out o’ here you little rapscallion!” he roared, evidently expecting Brandon to be frightened by his vehemence. “We don’t allow no loafing ’round this office. Git, I say, or —”

At that instant the street door behind the amused Brandon was opened, and with one glance at the new comer the clerk’s jaws shut together like a trap, he turned about and bounded to his seat on the stool with great ability, and seizing his pen went to work on his books with monstrous energy.

Brandon turned about also, surprised at these proceedings, and found a short, pudgy looking little man standing in the doorway of the office, gazing at the clerk with a broad smile on his red face; but upon looking closer the boy discovered that, although the

mouth was smiling, the gentleman's eyes were very stern indeed behind the gold rimmed eye glasses.

"What is the meaning of this unseemly conduct, Weeks?" he asked in a tone of displeasure.

"I—I was just showin' this—this young friend of mine how—how a feller up to the Bow'ry acted t'other night," murmured the clerk, a sort of ghastly red color mounting into his withered face beneath the parchment-like skin.

"The Bowery?" repeated the gentleman, severely, and Brandon decided that this was no other than Mr. Adoniram Pepper himself.

"Yes, sir; Bowery Theater, you know," responded the clerk glibly, with an imploring side glance at Brandon. "'Twas in the play, 'The Buccaneer's Bride,' you know."

"No, I *don't* know," replied Mr. Pepper, in disgust. "So this is your friend, is it?" and he turned his gaze upon Brandon genially.

"Our friendship is of rather short duration," said Don, smiling.

"So I presume," returned Mr. Pepper. "Did you wish to see me?"

"Just a moment, sir."

"I'll give you two moments if you like." Then he turned again to the clerk and shook one fat finger at him. "One of these days I'll discharge you, Weeks," he said sternly.

"I expect so," groaned the clerk. "And then what'll I do?"

Mr. Pepper looked at him a moment silently.

"Then you'll go and lie somewhere else, I suppose. You *will* lie, Alfred Weeks, and I suppose I might as

well keep you here and let you lie to me, as to turn you loose upon your fellow men. Well, well! Now, young man;" he turned with a sigh from the clerk and again looked at Brandon.

"I suppose you are Mr. Pepper?" began Brandon.

"I — sup — pose — I — am," replied the gentleman, with great care, scrutinizing the face of the captain's son with marked interest.

"Let's see, what is your name?" he said; "or, no, you needn't tell me. I know it already. Your name is Tarr, and you are Captain Horace Tarr's son!"

"Yes, sir, I am," Brandon replied in surprise.

"I knew it, I knew it!" declared Mr. Pepper, shaking both the boy's hands so violently that the eye glasses, which had a hard enough time generally in staying on the little man's nose, tumbled off, and were only caught and saved from destruction by great agility on Mr. Pepper's part.

"My dear boy! I'd have known you if I'd met you in Timbuctoo!" he declared. "Come into my office and tell me all about yourself. I've been thinking about you ever since — er — your poor father's death. I've got something to tell you, too."

He led Brandon toward the inner door, marked "Private," and opening it, disclosed a comfortably furnished room with a fire in the grate, and a general air of cheerfulness about it.

"Come right in," he repeated, and then shut the door behind his visitor.

But no sooner was the door closed than the acrobatic clerk was off his stool, and had his ear fitted to the keyhole with a celerity which denoted much practice in the art of eavesdropping.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH BRANDON VENTURES INTO RATHER DIS- REPUTABLE SOCIETY

"My dear boy, sit down!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper, motioning Brandon to a chair. "Sit down and let me look at you."

He himself took a chair at a desk by the window and studied the boy intently for several moments. Meanwhile Brandon was making a mental examination of the shipping merchant as well.

Adoniram Pepper was a little, rotund man with a good deal of color in his face and very little hair on his head. His mouth was always smiling, but at times, as Brandon had already seen, the gray eyes could be very stern indeed behind the gold rimmed glasses, which latter had such hard work remaining upon Mr. Pepper's squat nose.

"Yes, sir, you are the perfect picture of your father," declared the shipping merchant at last. "I thought when I read of his death that we should never see his like again; but you have the promise of all his outward characteristics, at least. I hope you've his inner ones, too."

"I hope so," replied Brandon, pleased indeed at such praise of his father.

"He was a good man," continued Mr. Pepper ruminatively. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Brandon, sir."

"Oh yes, I remember now. Your father talked to me of you. He wanted you to follow the sea, too, and I suppose that is what you've come down here to New York for, eh?"

"Yes, I hope to go to sea," responded Brandon slowly.

Had he not remembered his experience with Caleb Wetherbee, without doubt Brandon would have opened his heart to the eccentric merchant and told him all; but bearing in mind the (to him) evident treachery of the mate of the *Silver Swan*, he was not ready to take into his confidence every friend of his father who happened to turn up.

"I thought so, I thought so!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper, rubbing his fat hands softly together. "The sea, by all means, my boy. That's where I've obtained my living — and something beside — for many years, though in a little different way from your father. Captain Tarr commanded one of my vessels before he purchased the *Silver Swan*."

"Yes, so he has told me," responded Brandon.

"It was a sad thing — his loss at sea," said Mr. Pepper.

He still smiled, but there was moisture on his eye glasses, and he removed and wiped them gently on a silk handkerchief.

"And he left you hardly a penny's worth?" he continued interrogatively

"I have only about fifty dollars," Brandon replied briefly.

"Only fifty dollars," repeated the shipping merchant softly. "Not much — more than I had, though, when I went out to seek my fortune; but I had friends — powerful friends — and so have you, Brandon."

"Not many of them, I fancy," Don returned, smiling.

"Not many, perhaps; but *some*," the other declared with confidence, "and one of them is Adoniram Pepper."

"Thank you, Mr. Pepper," said Don. "I hope I shall be worthy of your kindness."

"No doubt of that — no doubt of that," rejoined the merchant, beaming upon him benignantly. "But to *talk* isn't enough for Adoniram Pepper; I want to *do* something for you, my boy."

"I — I don't know just what you can do for me, sir," said Brandon doubtfully.

"Don't know? Why, you want to go to sea, don't you?"

"Yes, sir; I think I do."

"Then I *can* help you," declared the merchant. "I've several vessels — three are in port at the present time — and it will be strange indeed if I can't find a berth on one of them for you."

"But I'm no sailor yet; I've got to learn," objected Don.

"So I suppose; but I'll risk your learning fast enough. Now, where would you like to go, and what position shall I give you?" and Mr. Pepper settled himself deeper into his chair, and looked as though

he was prepared to offer Don any position he craved, from cook's assistant to captain.

Brandon felt just a little bewildered by all this, and probably showed his bewilderment on his face.

"I'll tell you what I have now," went on Mr. Pepper. "There's the brig *Calypso*, loading for Port Said — she sails tomorrow; and the clipper ship *Frances Pepper* (my sister's name, you know) unloading from Rio, and bound back there and to Argentine ports in a fortnight; and then there's the whaleback, Number Three."

"The whaleback?" queried Brandon in perplexity.

"Yes, sir, whaleback; a whaleback steamer, you know. Didn't you ever see one?"

Brandon shook his head.

"Well, you'll have a chance to," declared Mr. Pepper. "These whalebacks are something new. Lots o' folks don't believe in 'em; but I do. I bought the third one the company ever built, and it lies at one of my wharves now, being fitted up."

"But where will *that* go?" Brandon inquired with interest.

Mr. Pepper rubbed his bald pate reflectively.

"Well," he said, "that I don't know yet. I haven't decided. I've got a scheme, but whether 'twill work or not, I can't say. I must find a man to command her first. I don't suppose *you'd* feel like doing that, would you?" and the ship owner laughed jollily.

"I'm afraid not; perhaps, though, there'd be some other place on her I could fill with satisfaction to you."

"Perhaps so. If I put her in the passenger trade,

how would you like to be purser — assistant purser, of course, till you learn the duties?"

"I think I should like it," replied Brandon, with some hesitation, however; "provided, of course, that I could take it at all."

"Eh? Not take it? Why not?" demanded Mr. Pepper.

"Well, first I want to see my father's old mate — one of the men saved from the raft, you know — about — well, about a matter concerning the wreck. Perhaps, then, if you can give me a berth, I'll be able to accept it."

"Going over to the hospital to see him, eh? I know Caleb Wetherbee."

"No, he's out of the hospital now. He gave me his address — New England Hotel, on this very street — and hunting for the place is what brought me here."

"Bless my soul!" cried the ship owner; "Caleb out of hospital? Why, I didn't expect he'd be 'round for some time yet. The papers said he was pretty nearly done for when he got to New York. It went harder with him than it did with the other sailor — a good deal harder."

Brandon looked at him curiously. If Caleb Wetherbee was a particular friend of Mr. Pepper, the captain's son began to feel some doubt as to the latter's sincerity.

"Perhaps you can tell me where the New England Hotel is?" he asked.

"Yes, it's right along here on this side of the street; several blocks away, perhaps. But," he added, "you don't tell me that Caleb is *there*? Why, he

must be 'way down on his luck. I must see about this."

Mr. Pepper wrinkled his brow nervously and Brandon rose.

"Where are you going?"

"Up to see this man — this mate of the Silver Swan."

"Oh yes. Well, you tell him I'm coming up to see him myself, today. It's a mystery to me why he should go to *that* place. I don't understand it. How was he looking when you saw him — for I take it you *have* seen him?"

"How do you mean — sick or well?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he appeared in pretty fair health, I should say," replied Brandon, beginning to think that there was something queer about it all.

"Well, I'll see him myself," declared the merchant, rising and giving the boy his hand. "I tell you what we'll do, Brandon. If you don't get back here by noon, I'll step up and get you, and we'll go to lunch together; then afterward we'll take a look at the whaleback, if you like."

Brandon thanked him and opened the door into the outer office, almost falling over Mr. Alfred Weeks, who had his head suspiciously near the keyhole.

"Lo — looking for my ruler that I dropped," declared the red haired clerk, as his employer's eyes rested sternly upon him.

But as he passed out, Brandon noticed that the ruler was on the high desk holding open the leaves of a much tattered paper novel.

“Funny sort of fellow for a respectable ship owner to employ,” Brandon decided, as he made his way along the crowded thoroughfare. “In fact, I guess I’ll withhold my opinion of all three of these people till I know ’em better — Wetherbee, Pepper, and his clerk.”

By closely scanning the signs on the buildings as he passed, the captain’s son finally discovered the place he sought. He came within an ace of not doing so, however, for the words “New England Hotel” were simply painted on a small strip of tin on one side of the doorway, the rest of the sign space being devoted to the words: John Brady, Wines, Liquors, and Cigars.

Brandon hesitated a moment before entering the place. It was plainly a saloon of the worst type, the “hotel” part evidently being but a “blind” by means of which the bar could be kept open all night.

Two or three disreputable men — sailors or long-shoremen by appearance — were hanging about the door, but Brandon Tarr had a good deal of confidence in his ability to take care of himself, and finally ascended the steps.

A sickening odor of stale tobacco smoke and bad liquor assailed his nostrils as he stepped within the room, and he was almost tempted to back out and give up his intention of seeing Wetherbee. But the man behind the bar — a villainous looking fellow with a closely cropped head and red face — had seen him and came briskly forward.

“Well, young felley, what kin I do fur ye?” he asked, in what was intended as a pleasant tone.

Deciding that he was in for it, the captain's son walked forward to the bar and replied:

"Nothing to drink, thank you. I'm looking for a man who's stopping here — Caleb Wetherbee."

The bartender eyed him curiously and repeated:

"Caleb Wetherbee, eh? Well, I'll see 'f he's here."

He stepped back to a door leading into an inner room and, opening it a crack, called to somebody inside. There was a whispered conversation between the men, and the bull necked individual came back to the bar.

"All right, m' duck; he's in dere," he said, with a grin, and a motion of his thumb toward the inner door.

"Yer don't have ter send in no kyard."

Taking this as a permission to enter, Brandon walked across the long saloon, littered with tables and chairs, and its door covered with sawdust, and opened the door.

The apartment beyond was as badly furnished as the outer room, there being only a square deal table and several wooden bottomed chairs. In one of these chairs before the table, with his head bowed upon his arms, was the sailor whom Brandon had seen two days before in the woods on his uncle's farm back in Chopmist, the only occupant of the place.

CHAPTER XIII

THE OLD SAILOR WITH THE WOODEN LEG

IT was only in the country—in the woods and sheltered fence corners—that the patches of snow still remained on this sixth day of April. In New York the sun shone warmly upon the sidewalks, washed clean by the shower of the night before, and the tiny patches of grass in the parks and squares were quite green again.

About the middle of the forenoon a man stumped along a street leading to what remains of the Battery park—a man dressed in a half uniform of navy blue, and with a face (where the beard did not hide the cuticle) as brown as a berry.

At first glance one would have pronounced this person to be a sailor, and have been correct in the surmise, too.

The man's frame was of huge mold, with massive development of chest and limbs, and a head like a lion's. But his bronzed cheeks were somewhat hollow, and his step halting, this latter not altogether owing to the fact that his right leg had been amputated at the knee and the deficiency supplied by an old fashioned wooden leg.

Still, despite his evident infirmity, the old seaman looked cheerfully out upon the world on this bright

April morning, and pegged along the sidewalk and into the park with smiling good nature.

Not a beggar had accosted him during his walk down town without having a nickel tossed to him, and it was with vast contentment that the wooden legged sailor at length seated himself upon a bench, from which vantage point he could overlook the bay and its multitudinous shipping.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, sniffing the air which blew in from the sea, like a hungry dog. “This is *life*, this is! Thank heaven I’ve got away from them swabs of doctors at last. Another week at that ere hospital would ha’ been the death o’ me. Still, I reckon they meant well ‘nough.”

He sat there for some time in cheerful silence, and drank in the exhilarating air, his pea cloth jacket thrown open to the breeze, baring the broad expanse of flannel shirt beneath.

“A few days o’ this’ll put me right on my feet,” he said, with delight, “better’n all the tonics the old saw-bones ever invented. Lord! if I’d had this breeze a-blowin’ inter my winder up there to the hospital, I’d been out a fortnight ago.

“The old man ain’t dead yet. It was a pretty hard tug, I admit; but here I be!”

He slapped his leg with such vigor that a flock of sparrows flew up with sudden affright from the path; but this energetic gesture was taken in another sense by the group of urchins which had gathered near by to talk and fight (much after the manner of their feathered prototypes, by the way) over the morning’s sale of papers.

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At the old man's motion half a dozen of these sharp eyed little rascals broke away from the group, and ran shrieking toward him, wildly waving their few remaining wares in his face.

“’Ere you are, sir! *Tribune, Sun, World!*”

“*Tribune*,” said the old sailor, laughing heartily as though he saw something extremely ludicrous in their mistake.

“My last ’un, sir. Thankee!”

The successful Arab pocketed his money and went back to his friends, while the sailor slowly unfolded the sheet and took up the thread of his reflections again.

“Once I get my sea legs on,” he thought, fumbling in his pocket for a pair of huge, steel bowed spectacles, which he carefully wiped and placed astride his nose —“once I get my sea legs on, I’ll take a trip up ter Rhode Island and see the cap’n’s boy, unless he turns up in answer to my letter.

“Poor lad! he’s doubtless heart broken by Cap’n Horace’s death, and won’t feel much like goin’ into this ’ere treasure huntin’ business; but for his own good I’ll have ter rouse him up. It would be what the cap’n would wish, I know.”

He let the paper lie idly on his knee a moment, and a mist rose in his eyes.

“Never mind if the old brig *has* gone to pieces before we get there,” he muttered. “I’ve got a little shot in the locker yet, an’ the boy sha’n’t come ter want. I’ll do my duty by him as though he was my own son, that I will!”

He picked up the paper again, and turned naturally

to the shipping news, which he ran over carelessly, smiling the while. Finally his eye was attracted by something near the bottom of the column.

"Eh, what's this?" he exclaimed. "What's this about the Silver Swan?"

With great excitement he read the following news item, following each line of the text with his stumpy forefinger:

Captain Millington, of the English steamer Manitoba, which arrived here yesterday from Brazil, reports that he passed a very dangerous wreck in latitude 22° 03', longitude 70° 32'. It was the hull of a brig, apparently in good condition, but with her masts snapped off close to the decks, and all her rigging carried away. The name on her stern was Silver Swan, Boston.

This is the same derelict reported by the steamer Montevideo at Savannah several weeks ago. According to Captain Millington, the wreck of the brig is a great menace to all vessels plying between this and South American ports, as its course seems to be right across the great highway followed by most of the steamship lines.

It will be remembered that the Silver Swan was wrecked over two months ago on Reef Eight, southwest of Cuba, grounding, according to the report of the survivors of her crew, upright on the rock. The captain of the Montevideo sighted her not far from the reef, from which she was doubtless loosened by the westerly gale of February 13th; but since that time she has floated some distance to the north and east, and if she follows the same tactics as many of her sister derelicts, she may zigzag across the course of the South American steamers for months.

The cruisers Kearsarge and Vesuvius are both lying in port at present, and it will be respectfully suggested to the Navy Department that one or both of those vessels be sent to destroy this and several others of the most dangerous derelicts now floating off our coast.

“Shiver my timbers, sir!”

With this forcible and exceedingly salty ejaculation, the old sailor with the wooden leg dropped the newspaper to the walk, and his spectacles along with it, and springing up, trampled upon them both.

But in his great excitement he noticed neither the torn paper nor the ruined glasses. He stumped up and down the walk for several moments before he became calm enough to think coherently.

In fact, the blue coated policeman on the corner had begun to eye him suspiciously.

“The Silver Swan afloat—a derelict!” he muttered. “This 'ere is a sitiuation I didn't look for. An' then, them blasted cruisers are liable to go down there and blow her into kingdom come any minute. The Silver Swan on Reef Eight was bad enough, but the Silver Swan afloat, at the mercy of the gales as well as other vessels, is worse!

“Now, what in creation'll I do about it? I haven't heard from the boy yet, and there's little enough time as it is. Why, she might sink 'most any time with all them di'monds the cap'n told about aboard her!

“I'll take a steamer to get down there ahead of them confounded iron pots” (by this disrespectful term did he designate Uncle Sam's cruisers), “but who under the canopy's got a steamer to charter?

“By the great horn spoon, I have it!” he exclaimed, after a moment's thought. “Adoniram Pepper is just the fellow.”

With this declaration he jammed his hat on his head, and stumped off as rapidly as one good leg and one wooden one could carry him, toward the shipping merchant's office on Water Street.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OLD SAILOR'S EXCITEMENT

As the old sailor hurried along the street toward the ship owner's office he became calmer, and, being a person who had all his life been taking greater or less chances in his business of seagoing, he began to look at the situation more composedly.

The Silver Swan was without doubt in far greater danger of destruction now than she had been while hard and fast on the reef, but no amount of worrying would better the matter, and therefore one might accept the fact coolly. Then, besides, she had floated unmolested for over six weeks already, and there was a big chance for her doing so for six weeks or more to come.

"Blast these navy vessels any way, I say!" the old man muttered, stumping along now at a moderate gait. "They probably won't be able to find her. And if nothing collides with her, I reckon she'll keep afloat for one while, for I can swear myself that the old brig warn't injured none below the water line — she went on that reef jest as easy!"

"She's got the same chance o' staying above board — the Silver Swan has — as any other craft that's become a derelict. Look at the schooner W. L. White,

abandoned by her crew during the great storm of '88. She floated about the North Atlantic for the better part of a year, before she went ashore at last on the Hebrides.

"An' then there was the Weyer G. Sargent, mahogany laden, floated fifty five hundred mile, or more, 'cording to the pilot chart, a-swingin' 'round the Atlantic from New Foundland to the Azores for two years. An' there may be many another good ship that's got a bigger record 'n that at this very day, down in the Sargasso sea. Oh, it might be worse."

Nevertheless, despite this cheerful view, the old sailor's forehead was knotted into a scowl as he opened the door of the ship owner's dingy office and entered. The red haired clerk was alone at the desk and the door of the private office was shut.

"Well, you jail bird, are you here yet?" demanded the visitor impolitely, eying the clerk with exceeding disfavor.

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Featherbee —"

"Wetherbee, you scoundrel!" roared the sailor, in a voice like a bull.

"Oh, yes! I should say Wetherbee — er — that's what I meant," the clerk hastened to say.

It was remarkable to notice the difference between the greeting accorded to Caleb Wetherbee and that given young Brandon Tarr shortly before.

"So you haven't managed to get at Pepperpod's till and clear out, yet, eh?" demanded Caleb jocularly.

Mr. Weeks scowled and grinned at the same time,

a feat that very few men can perform; but he made no verbal reply to the question.

"Where is he?" queried the sailor, nodding toward the inner office. "In his den?"

"He's busy — engaged," Mr. Weeks hastened to say.

"I believe you're lying to me, Weeks," returned the sailor, after eying the fellow a moment. "You'd rather lie than eat. Where's Pepperpod?"

"He — he really *is* engaged, sir," declared Weeks, who stood in mortal fear of the brawny sailor. "That is, he told me to say so to anybody that called —"

"I don't doubt it — that's what's taught you to lie," cried Caleb, in disgust. "Well, I'm going to see him if he's engaged fifty times. Cut along now and tell him I'm here."

Mr. Weeks slowly descended from his stool, evidently unwilling to comply with the request.

"Get a move on you," the sailor commanded. "If you don't I'll roast you over a slow fire. I'm just out of the hospital and I've got an appetite like an ostrich — or I'd never think of eating *you*."

Mr. Weeks unwillingly went to the inner door and rapped on the panel. Then he turned the knob and went in, remaining a few moments, and on making his appearance again, held the portal open for Caleb.

The sailor entered without a word and the clerk closed the door behind him; then, as on the former occasion, he applied his ear to the keyhole with a diligence worthy of a better cause.

Mr. Pepper was sitting before his desk, which was piled high with papers and letters. The day's mail

had just been sent up from the wareroom office by Mr. Marks, the ship owner's trusted manager, or "steward," as Adoniram was in the habit of calling him.

Beginning business life more than fifty years before in this very office, Mr. Pepper could not bring himself, as his trade increased, to leave his old quarters, and having found his manager to be a most trustworthy man, he had shifted the burden of the more arduous duties upon his younger shoulders, and himself reposed contentedly amid the dust, the gloom, and the cobwebs of the Water Street office.

Thus it was that few people ever saw "Adoniram Pepper & Co." to know him; but to his old friends, those of his boyhood and young manhood, Adoniram was always the same.

Naturally his acquaintance was mostly among seafaring people, and it was no uncommon sight to see old hulks of sea captains and ship owners, long past their usefulness, steering a course for the Water Street office on pleasant days, where they were sure to receive a pleasant word from the little old gentleman, if he was in, and not uncommonly a bit of silver to spend for luxuries which "sailors' homes" do not supply.

The old gentleman sprang up at once at Caleb's appearance, the unfortunate eye glasses jumping off the chubby little nose as though they were endowed with life. Mr. Pepper gave both his hands to the huge sailor, who indeed looked gigantic beside the little man, and begged him to sit down.

"Well, Pepperpod, how are ye?" cried the sailor,

in a hearty roar that shook the light pieces of furniture in the room, just as his bulk shook the chair he had seated himself in.

"First rate, old Timbertoes!" declared the old gentleman, laughing merrily. "So you're out of the hospital, at last?"

"I be, Adoniram, I be!" cried Caleb with satisfaction. "Never was so glad o' anythin' in my life. Them sawbones would have killed me if they'd kep' me there much longer."

"Well, well, Caleb, you was a mighty sick man — a mighty sick man."

"I reckon I was," responded the sailor reflectively.

"The doctor wouldn't let me come in to see you," said the merchant, smiling jovially; "so I had to content myself with sending up things."

"Yes, you did," said Caleb, turning on him sternly. "I *did* think, Adoniram, that you wouldn't waste your money on such truck as that — a-sendin' me white grapes, an' jellies, an' bunches o' posies."

He snorted in veriest scorn.

"Well, er — er — you see, Caleb, I told Frances about you and she took over the things herself," said Adoniram hesitatingly.

"Hem!"

The old sea dog flushed up like a girl and mopped his suddenly heated face with a great bandanna, finally saying gruffly:

"You tell your sister, Miss Frances, that I am mightily obleeged for 'em, Adoniram. They — er — jest went to the right spot, you tell her; jest what I needed to tone me up!"

"You'd better come up and tell her yourself, Caleb," said the merchant, with a sly smile.

"Well — er — mebbe I will. Thankee, Adoniram."

He was silent a moment, and then, suddenly be-thinking himself of the errand which had brought him there, he turned upon the little merchant with a slap of his knee which sounded throughout the office like a gun shot.

"But this 'ere ain't what brought me here — not by a long chalk. Ye know the Silver Swan, Adoniram? Cap'n Horace Tarr's brig 't I was with when she grounded on Reef Eight, two months and more ago?"

Mr. Pepper nodded.

"Well, sir, she's afloat."

"Afloat!"

"That's what I said; afloat! A-f-l-o-t-e," responded the sailor, spelling the word very carefully, if a trifle erratically.

"How — how can that be?"

"Well, ye see she went aground jest like she was goin' inter stocks for repairs, and if we'd stuck by her, it's my opinion Cap'n Tarr'd ha' been alive now." He stopped and blew his nose hastily. "Well, what is, can't be bettered, so we'll say no more o' that.

"But what I'm gettin' at is this: she went aground all standin', an' the storm wot come up right arter-wards, blew her off ag'in. She's been floating, according to this morning's paper, ever since."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Adoniram. "It's too bad her hull can't be secured for the boy. If it's still sound —"

"Sound as a dollar!"

"Where is it floating?"

“ ‘Cordin’ to the report of a cap’n wot sighted her, she’s somewheres about latitude 22, longitude 70.”

“ A pretty valuable derelict, eh, Caleb?” said the merchant, reflectively.

“ Valible? Well, I should say!” The old sailor looked at his friend curiously a moment, and then leaned forward and rested his huge hand on Adoniram’s knee. “ Besides a valible cargo wot we took on at the Cape and Rio, *there’s enough diamonds hid aboard that brig to make the boy a second Vanderbilt!*”

“ Mercy me!” exclaimed the merchant, and this time the eye glasses leaped off their insecure resting place and fell with a crash to the floor, the splintered crystal flying in all directions.

“ Now you’ve done it, Adoniram!” ejaculated Caleb in disgust. “ What under the canopy a man like you—with no nose to speak of—wants to try to wear such tackle as them for, is beyond me.”

“ Well—er—Frances thinks they look better on me than other kinds of glasses,” remarked the merchant meekly.

“ Well—hem!—I s’pose they *do* look some better on ye,” declared Caleb loyally, and then a slight noise from the other side of the door caused him to jump up and spring hastily to it.

When he flung the door open, however, the red haired clerk was astride his high stool with a look of perfect innocence on his face; but Caleb was not reassured. He shook his huge fist at the fellow, and then shut the door again, turning the key in the lock and hanging his hat upon the door knob for further precaution.

CHAPTER XV

CALEB RECEIVES A STARTLING COMMUNICATION

“SOME of these days,” said Caleb, with decision, when he had taken these precautions, “I shall wring that scoundrel’s neck, Adoniram. I wonder at your keeping him here.”

“Well, you see, nobody else would have him,” responded the merchant, as though that fact was reason enough for *his* keeping the objectionable Mr. Weeks.

“Ya-as — one o’ your blasted philanthropic notions,” declared Caleb, with a snort denoting disgust. “Well, he’ll rob and murder you some day and then you’ll wish you’d heard to me. If ‘jail bird’ ain’t written on *his* face, then I never saw it on no man’s.”

“But, Caleb, what do you mean by the astounding remark you just made about the Silver Swan?” asked the merchant, drawing the sailor’s mind away from the subject of Mr. Alfred Weeks and his frailties.

“I’ll tell you about it,” said Caleb, in a lower tone, seating himself by the desk again. “What I said is straight, Pepper. There is hidden inside that hulk of the Silver Swan, a lot o’ di’monds — how many, I don’t know — but enough, according to Cap’n Horace’s own words to make a man fabulously rich. They belong to his boy, Brandon, and *we* must get ‘em for him.

"I never knew a word about the stones till we was on the raft. Cap'n Horace was pretty fur gone—any one with half an eye could see *that*—and when we'd been out several days an' hadn't sighted no ship, he wrote a long letter to Brandon an' give it to me with a package of other papers.

"I've got them papers right here at this identical minute; but I ain't opened 'em, 'cause it ain't my place to do so. They tells all about the di'monds an' how they come into Cap'n Horace's han's.

"It seems that just afore we left the Cape a man come aboard the Silver Swan and brought a package of wot *he* thought was papers, to Cap'n Horace, from his brother Anson."

"Why, Anson was dead long ago, I thought," interrupted Mr. Pepper.

"So did everybody else think so; but he wasn't. He was dead, though, when this feller seed Cap'n Horace, for he'd give the package into the man's hands when he was dying, for *him* to send to Cap'n Tarr. But we put into the Cape afore the man got 'round to sendin' 'em to the States.

"*He* never knew what a valible thing he was a carryin' 'round; but when the cap'n come to open the package he found a lot o' di'monds done up in a separate wrapper. These he hid somewhere about the brig—he tells about it in this letter to Brandon, I b'lieve.

"I wanted to know why he didn't take 'em on the raft when we left the brig, but it seems he misdoubted himself about a rascally sailor we had with us— one Jim Leroyd.

"This 'ere Leroyd had been snoopin' around the cabin when the cap'n was given the di'monds, and he thought the feller suspected something. So, not knowing how it might go with any of us, he left the gems on the brig, preferring to risk losin' 'em altogether, rather than to cause strife an' p'r'aps bloodshed on that raft.

"An' I reckon 'twas lucky he did so, fur we had trouble enough with that swab Leroyd."

"Why, wasn't he the man who was saved with you?" asked the merchant.

"That's who."

"Tell me, Caleb," said Mr. Pepper earnestly, "why was it he stood the experience so much better than you? Why, he was discharged from the hospital in a week, so I understand, while you show traces of the suffering you underwent even now."

Caleb closed his lips grimly and looked at the little man in silence for several moments. Then he leaned further forward and clutched his arm with one great brown hand.

"He had food that I didn't have," he whispered hoarsely.

"What!" cried Adoniram, shrinking back, his eyes abulge.

Caleb nodded slowly.

"There were four of us on that raft. Paulo Montez — he went first. We divided the food and water, an' that villain Leroyd ate his all up. Then we had ter drive him behind his chest at the other end of the raft, an' keep him there at the point of our pistols.

"Then the cap'n went, an' — an' — *I had to throw*

him to the sharks to keep him out o' the clutches o' that cannibal Leroyd!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the ship owner, shrinking back into his chair, his face the picture of horrified amazement.

"Yes, sir," whispered Caleb; "he dragged poor Paulo's body back o' that chest — an' — well, 'taint no use talkin'! I ain't said a word about it before to any living creature. It's only my word ag'in his, at best. But I swear, Adoniram, I'd kill the hound with as little compunction as I would a rat.

"He's been sneaking 'round the hospital, inquiring about me, too," continued the sailor. "He's got his eye on these papers, for he see Cap'n Horace give 'em to me. I reckon he don't know what they're about, but he suspects there's money in it. He was 'round to the hospital only last night, so the doctor told me.

"And now, Adoniram, wot I want o' you is to help me find this derelict before some o' Uncle Sam's blasted iron pots go out after her. We must get the boy down from that uncle's place in Rhode Island

"Why, didn't you see him this morning?" asked Mr. Pepper, in surprise.

"See who?"

"Why, the boy — Captain Tarr's son, Brandon?"

"What?" roared the sailor. "Then he's here in New York, is he?"

"Why — of — course," responded the merchant, in bewilderment. "I thought you'd seen him again. He started out to call on you not two hours ago. He

said you'd given him your address — at the New England Hotel, just below here.

"And what I want to say, Caleb is that I don't consider it a great proof of friendship on *your* part, for you to go to such a place as that, even if you were low in finances. I'd only be too glad to have you come to my house and stay the rest of your natural life — and so would Frances."

"Me! — at the New England Hotel! — why the man's crazy!" declared Caleb.

"Ain't you stopping there?" gasped the merchant.

"Am I? Well, I guess not! I ain't but just got out o' the hospital this blessed morning."

"Why, he said he'd seen you once, and you'd told him to call at the New England Hotel."

"Who?" roared Caleb.

"Brandon Tarr."

"Why, man alive, I never saw the lad in all my life!"

"Then," declared Adoniram with energy, "there's foul play about it. When I came down this morning I found the captain's son waiting to see me. He'd just come down from Rhode Island, I believe, and he'd got your address — said he'd already seen you once, mind you — and was going up to this place to see you again.

"I thought 'twas funny you should put up at such a house, Caleb; but I didn't know but perhaps you were 'on your uppers'" (Caleb snorted at this), "and had gone there for cheapness. I told Brandon I'd come up after him this noon and take him to lunch."

But Caleb was on his feet now, and pacing the floor like a caged lion.

"I see it all — I see it all!" he declared. "It's some o' that swab Leroyd's work. Why, man alive, do you know what the New England Hotel is? It's one o' the wickedest places in New York. I know the den well, and the feller as runs it, too. Why, the boy's in danger every moment he stays there!"

He seized his hat and jammed it on his head again.

"Ef anything's happened to that boy, I'll break every bone in that scoundrel's body!" he exclaimed, seizing the door and throwing it wide open without the formality of unlocking it.

The splintered wood and broken lock flew in all directions as he dashed through the doorway and flung himself into the street, while Mr. Pepper remained weakly in his chair, too utterly bewildered to move, and the festive Mr. Weeks dodged behind the high desk with alacrity, as the sailor went through the outer office like a whirlwind.

CHAPTER XVI

TELLING HOW BRANDON BEARDED THE LION IN HIS LAIR

As Brandon Tarr entered the apartment behind the bar room of the New England Hotel, the man at the table raised his head and surveyed him surlily. Evidently he had been drinking, and the liquor had changed his mood greatly from that of the affable sailor who had accosted the captain's son in the Chopmist woods.

"Well, how came *you* here?" inquired the sailor, in no very friendly tone, gazing at Brandon, with bloodshot eyes.

"I came down on the train."

"Ain't you lost?"

"Guess not," responded the boy.

The man shifted his position uneasily, keeping his eyes fixed upon his visitor.

"Can't say as I expected to see you — just yet, any way."

"No?" returned Brandon coolly.

"Say! wot the blazes do you want, any way?" demanded the sailor fiercely, after an instant's silence. "It won't pay you to be sassy here, my lad, now I can assure ye."

"Think so? Seems to me you're not as glad to

see me as I reckoned you would be. It didn't exactly pay you to come 'way up to Rhode Island to pump me, did it?"

The fellow hissed out an oath between his teeth and clinched his fist angrily.

"You're too fresh, you are!" he declared.

"Maybe."

"So I went up there to pump you, eh?"

"I reckon."

"And what did *you* come down here for?"

"To pump you," responded the captain's son, laughing.

The sailor stared at him in utter amazement for a moment.

"Of all the swabs——" he began, but Brandon interrupted him.

"See here, Wetherbee, I've come here for a purpose. My father intrusted you with some papers for me (though why he ever did so *I* don't see—I mistrusted your ugly face the first time I ever saw it), and now you are trying to play me false."

"You know too much!" roared the sailor, rising and thumping the table with his clenched fist.

"Yes, I *do* know too much for your good—or for the success of your plot," Brandon replied, with cool sarcasm. "See this?"

He took the bit of newspaper from his pocket and tossed it upon the table before the man.

"What is it?" demanded the sailor, clutching at the clipping.

"The newspaper item stating that the Silver Swan is a derelict, instead of being sunken, as you declared

to me. Had I not found it in the woods after you left, I might have still believed your lying yarn, Wetherbee."

The sailor crumpled the bit of paper in his first and shook the clenched member in the boy's face.

"Young man," he said with emphasis, "ye think ye're smart; but do ye know that ye're likely ter git inter trouble 'fore ye get out o' this place? I don't 'low no boy ter sass me."

"I'm sorry for that," said Brandon, thinking the fellow's threat but mere bombastic eloquence; "for I reckon you'll have to stand it."

His very fearlessness caused the man to hesitate ere he used violence, for it *might* be that the boy had friends within call. The sailor therefore bit his thick lip in fury, and poured a shower of vituperations upon his visitor's head.

"Let me tell you something else, also," continued Brandon. "I propose to have those papers that father gave you."

"Oh, you do?" half screamed the man, stamping up and down the room in ungovernable rage.

"Yes, sir; and no amount of swearing will scare me. Those papers are mine and if you won't give them up peaceably, the law will make you."

Suddenly the man stopped storming and became more tranquil.

"So you're goin' ter law erbout it, be ye?"

"No, I don't think I'll have to; I think you'll see plain enough that it will be best for you to give them up. By your own confession you don't know where the treasure is hid; *but I do*. Somehow I'm going

to find the wreck of the brig and get — whatever it was father hid. But first, I want those papers that I may know *what* the — the treasure consists of."

"Oh, ye do? Well, how be ye goin' ter prove that I've got the docyments?"

"Very easily indeed," Brandon responded frankly. "I'm going to look up the sailor who was with you on the raft. If father gave you the papers *he* doubtless knows it, and I don't believe that there are *two* men as dishonest as you, Wetherbee."

"So you know where the old man has hid the stuff, hey? An' yer goin' ter see th' — th' other sailor an' git his evidence, be ye?"

The man's ugly face turned a deep reddish hue and he reached out his hands and clutched the empty chair as though he were strangling somebody. The gesture was so terribly realistic and the man's face so diabolical, that Brandon involuntarily shrank back.

"You little fool!" hissed the other slowly. "You've put yourself right inter my han's an' let me tell ye I'm a bad man ter monkey with. I've let ye hev it all your own way so fur, but now 'twill be *my* turn, an' don't you forgit it! Ye know where thet treasure is hidden aboard the brig, hey? Then, by the great jib boom, ye'll tell me or *ye'll never git out o' here alive!*"

As he uttered the threat he sprang upon the boy so suddenly that Brandon was totally unprepared for the assault. His victim was no match for his great strength, and was borne to the floor at once.

The villain's hand upon his throat deprived the boy

of all power of utterance, and he felt himself being slowly choked into insensibility.

Suddenly the door between the apartment and the bar room was flung wide open as though a small hurricane had descended upon the establishment of the New England Hotel. Don's villainous assailant — big and burly though he was — was seized in a grip of iron, pulled from his victim, and thrown bodily to the other side of the room.

"You scoundrel!" roared Caleb (for it was he) in a voice that made the chandelier tremble. "Would you kill the lad?"

But Brandon, now that the pressure was removed from his throat, was on his feet in a moment, staring curiously at the big, wooden legged sailor.

"Just saved you from adding murder to your other sins, did I?" continued the mate of the Silver Swan. "Did he hurt you, lad?"

"Guess I'm all right," responded Brandon, feeling of his throat as his assailant arose to his feet, scowling ferociously at the new comer.

"I'll live to see you hung yet, Jim Leroyd!" Caleb declared, shaking his huge fist at the sailor.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Brandon; "is *that* his name? Why, he told me he was Caleb Wetherbee!"

"He did, eh? Blast his impudence! Let me tell you, lad, if Cale Wetherbee looked like that scoundrel, he'd go drown himself for very shame. *I'm* Caleb Wetherbee, myself, and *you*, I reckon, are Brandon Tarr."

Brandon was fairly stupefied by this announcement.

"But what about the — the papers father put into his hands for me?" he asked, breathlessly.

"Your father give *him* papers, lad? Well, I reckon not! He's lied to ye."

"Then he hasn't them?"

"Not he. I've got 'em myself, safe and sound."

"You have them?" repeated Brandon.

"That I have," replied the mate confidently, "and what's more, I've got 'em right here!"

At this juncture the door behind them opened and the red faced barkeeper came into the room.

"Look er-here, wot's de meanin' of all dis, hey?" he demanded, eying Caleb with disfavor.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said the wooden legged sailor, in disgust. "I know *you*, Jack Brady. Get out here, you walking beer keg! I'm having a private seance with this gentleman," intimating the cowed Leroyd.

A quick look of intelligence passed between Leroyd and the bartender.

"Ye're tryin' ter kick up a shindy in dis place, dat's wot ye're at!" declared the latter, rolling up his sleeves, belligerently.

"Yes, and I'll kick up a bigger row before I'm through," Caleb replied threateningly. "Now you run out and play, sonny, while I talk to my friend, Mr. Leroyd, here."

This so angered the pugilistic looking man that he made a dash at the big sailor; but the consequences were exceedingly unpleasant.

Caleb's hammer-like fist swung round with the force of a pile driver, and an ox would have fallen before

that blow. As Mr. Brady himself would have put it, he was "knocked out in one round."

But the treacherous Leroyd, taking advantage of his friend's attack on the mate, sprang upon Caleb from the other side. This flank movement was totally unexpected, and, weakened by his long confinement in the hospital, the mate of the Silver Swan could not hold his own with his former shipmate.

Both went to the floor with a crash, and as they fell Leroyd tore open his antagonist's coat and seized a flat leather case from the mate's inside pocket. Dealing one heavy blow on the other's upturned face, the scoundrel sprang up and disappeared like a shot through the door at the opposite end of the apartment.

"Stop him!" roared Caleb, and Brandon, who had stood utterly bewildered and helpless throughout the scene, sprang forward to the door.

"The papers! He's stolen the papers!" he gasped, seizing the knob and trying to pull open the door.

But the key had been turned in the lock and the stout door baffled all his attempts upon it.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW THE OMNIPRESENT WEEKS PROVES HIS RIGHT TO THE TERM

HAMPERED as he was by his wooden leg, it was several moments before the old sailor could get upon his feet, and the festive Mr. Brady, maddened and almost blinded by the blow he had received in the first of the fracas, would have pitched into him had not Brandon threatened the fellow with one of the heavy chairs with which the room was furnished.

“I’ll make dis the sorriest day er your life, ye bloomir’ big brute!” declared Mr. Brady, holding one hand to his bruised face, and shaking the other fist at the sailor. “I’ll have ye jugged — that’s wot I’ll do —”

And just then he stopped, for in the doorway leading to the bar room stood Adoniram Pepper, flushed and breathless, and behind him the burly forms of two blue-coated policemen.

“Thank goodness, the boy is safe!” gasped the little merchant. “Are you hurt, Caleb?”

“Some shaken up, but that’s all, shipmate,” declared the mate of the Silver Swan. “I got here just in time to keep that brute Leroyd from choking the lad to death.”

“Mercy! and where is he now?”

"Skipped, I reckon," responded Caleb briefly, brushing the sawdust off his clothing.

"But he's stolen the papers," said Brandon.

"Not the papers your father gave Caleb?" cried the little man. "He must be captured at once!"

"Yes, he robbed me," said Caleb slowly; "but whether he got anything o' much value or not is another question. Let's get out o' here, 'Doniram, and take account o' cargo."

Just here the policemen crowded into the room.

"Has your man got away, sir?" one of them asked Mr. Pepper.

"I'm afraid he has, officer — unless you want this fellow arrested, Caleb?" indicating the saloon keeper.

At this Brady began to storm and rave disgracefully.

"Come, quit that, Brady!" commanded officer Mullen. "You're deep in this, I've no doubt. You want to walk a chalk line now, or I'll have your license taken away. D'ye understand?"

Mr. Brady subsided at this threat, and the party filed out.

"It's all right now, officer," said Adoniram, slipping something into Mr. Mullen's hand. "We won't trouble you further. If anything more comes of it, I'll step around and see the captain myself."

The two policemen nodded and Mr. Pepper led his friends back to his office.

On the way Brandon explained his previous connection with the villain Leroyd, and recounted what had occurred at the New England Hotel before Caleb's timely appearance.

"Well, I reckon you were just what Leroyd told

you — a little too fresh," was the comment of the mate of the Silver Swan. "'Twas only by luck that ye warn't garroted by that scoundrel. There's been more than one man gone into that dive that never come out afterwards, now I tell ye."

"You are wrong, Caleb," declared Mr. Pepper confidently "It was not luck — 'twas Providence."

"Mebbe you're right, old man," returned the mate. "Now, lad, come in here and tell us all about yourself before we do anything further. We want to get a thorough understanding o' the case."

They had arrived at the shipping merchant's office, but it was locked and Mr. Pepper had to use his own private pass key.

"Weeks has gone out," the old gentleman explained, ushering them in. "It's his dinner hour."

"I'm glad the swab's out of the way," growled the sailor. "I don't see what you keep that prying, sneaking rascal about here for any way. He'll do you some damage some time, 'Doniram."

"I — I should dislike to discharge him," said the old gentleman gently. "He — he is an unfortunate fellow —"

"Unfortunate!" snorted the mate in disgust.

"Yes, unfortunate, Caleb. Even his face is against him. Who would want such a looking fellow around an office? And office work is all he knows how to do. Marks wouldn't keep him down to the other office, so I *had* to take him up here."

"Had to!"

Caleb stared at his old friend in pitying surprise.

" 'Doniram,'" he said, "you — make — me — weary!"

Then he shook his head sadly and dropped heavily into a chair he had formerly occupied near the merchant's desk.

"Come," he said, turning to Brandon, holding out his hand affectionately, "come and sit down here beside me, my lad. We want to know each other better — you and I — and I've got a good deal to say to ye.

"Your father's last words to me was 'Remember, Cale!' an' they referred to the fac' that he'd left me in charge o' you — an' of your property. An' I'm rememberin', though that hospital business delayed me a good bit."

"But, Caleb," said the merchant nervously, "what will you do about those — those diamonds," and he looked at Brandon smilingly, "now that that scamp has stolen the captain's papers?"

"Diamonds?" echoed Brandon.

"Aye, diamonds — lashin's of 'em!" the sailor declared earnestly. "If yer father was ter be believed — an' *you* know whether or not to believe him as well as *I* — there's di'monds hid aboard that brig, enough to make you a rich man, my lad."

"But the papers?" repeated Mr. Pepper.

"Blast the papers!" exclaimed the sailor, slapping his thigh impatiently. "They don't amount to a row of pins."

"But they'll tell that Leroyd all about the treasure and just where to find it," said Brandon.

"And you won't know *where* to look for it aboard the Silver Swan," Mr. Pepper chimed in.

"I won't hey?" responded Caleb with a snort of disgust. "Sure of that, be ye?"

"I think I know where father would place the gems for safe keeping," said Brandon, slowly.

"Yes, an' I reckon *I* know, too," the mate declared. "There's a sliding panel in the cabin — eh, lad?"

Brandon nodded acquiescence.

"Yes, that's it," went on the sailor; "it come to me just now when I was a-thinkin' of the matter. We useter keep our private papers in that 'ere hole in the bulkhead. It's the third panel on the port side from the companionway."

"Sh!" exclaimed the merchant, "suppose somebody should overhear you."

"Oh, that sneak Weeks isn't here," replied Caleb carelessly. "You don't have anybody else working for you here who would snoop like him, do you, 'Doniram?'"

The merchant shook his head with a mild smile.

"Well, then," said the mate of the Silver Swan, "we can get down to business. We understand each other, eh, lad? Ye'll put yourself under our care, an' 'Doniram an' I'll see you through this thing."

"I'm only too glad to have your help," cried Don warmly. "Alone I can do nothing; but with you to help me, Mr. Wetherbee —"

"Drop that!" thundered Caleb. "Don't you 'mister' me, blast yer impudence! I'm Cale Wetherbee to *you*, as I was to yer father."

Then he added more mildly:

"You can count on me, Don. And you can count

on Pepperpod, here, every time, eh?" and he nodded to the ship owner.

"That you can, Don," rejoined Mr. Pepper. "And already I have a vessel I can place at your disposal. It is the whaleback steamer I spoke of this morning. You shall have her and go in quest of the Silver Swan."

"A whaleback, hey?" repeated Caleb quickly, with a doubtful shake of his head. "I don't know much about them new fangled things."

"Well, you shall before long," Mr. Pepper declared. "With her you can beat any of these cruisers to the brig, and get the diamonds before they blow her sky high."

"Now, let us go out to lunch; it is long past my regular hour," he continued. "I will close the office for the day and you must both go home with me. Wait, I'll telephone to Marks."

"Let me git my clo'es brushed before we go up town, 'Doniram,'" exclaimed Caleb, in sudden haste. "I've got sawdust all over me."

"All right," the merchant responded, giving the call for the wareroom office (it was a private line); "you'll find a whisk broom in that wardrobe there. Don can brush you."

The sailor arose and walked over to the wardrobe.

"Dern the thing! how it sticks," he remarked impatiently, tugging at the handle.

Then he exerted his great strength and the door flew open with surprising suddenness, and with it, to the startled amazement of the entire party, came the

red haired clerk, Alfred Weeks, clinging vainly to the inner knob.

The momentum of his exit fairly threw him across the small room, where he dropped into a chair which happened to stand handy, gazing, the picture of fright, at the infuriated sailor.

CHAPTER XVIII

BRANDON LISTENS TO A SHORT FAMILY HISTORY

"WEEKS! Weeks! I wouldn't have thought it of you," exclaimed Adoniram Pepper sorrowfully, turning away from the 'phone to gaze sternly at the rascally clerk.

"Wouldn't have thought it of him?" roared Caleb. "'Doniram, you're a fool! It's just exactly what you might have expected of him. Oh, you—you swab, you!" he added, shaking his fist at the trembling culprit. "I wish I had you aboard ship. If I wouldn't haze you!"

Then he sprang at the fellow, and seizing him ere he could escape, tossed him face downward over his knee, and, while he held him with one hand, delivered a most energetic spanking with the other huge palm, to his squirming prisoner's manifest discomfort.

"Oh! oh! oh!" roared Weeks, almost black in the face. "Oh, he's a-murderin' me! Let me go! Oh! oh!"

"Stop your bawling, Alfred," Mr. Pepper commanded, as the breathless sailor released the scamp and placed him upright with no gentle force.

Brandon, who had been well nigh convulsed with laughter at the mode of punishment the clerk had re-

ceived, had not thought it possible for the jolly Adoniram to ever appear so stern as he did now.

"Weeks," continued the merchant, the customary smile totally eradicated from his features, "Weeks, I have done my best for you for ten years. I've helped you the best I know how. I have shielded you from those who would have given you over to justice more than once, for your petty crimes. Now, sir, I am through with you!"

"This offense is unpardonable. You may go down to the other office and draw your salary to the end of the month, and never let me see you again until you have become a respectable member of society, and shown by your actions, not by words, that you are such. Go at once, sir!"

Weeks hesitated an instant as though he contemplated making an appeal to his old employer for mercy; but the look on Mr. Pepper's face forbade that. The old merchant was an embodiment of justice now; mercy for the rascally clerk had flown.

Picking up his hat, he limped silently to the door, but ere he disappeared he turned and looked at Brandon, who, in spite of himself, was unable to keep his face straight. He glared at the laughing youth an instant, and then the real nature of the fellow flashed out from beneath the veneer of apparently harmless impudence and cunning.

His dark, old looking face flushed deeply red, his narrow eyes flashed with sudden rage, and he shook his clenched fist at Brandon Tarr with insane fury.

"I'll even things up with *you*, you young whelp!"

he hissed, and in another moment limped out of the place.

"A nice fellow you've harbored, there, 'Doniram, just as I told you,'" Caleb declared. "He'll knife you some dark night, if you're not careful."

But Adoniram only shook his head sadly and returned to the telephone. After talking to his manager several minutes, he picked up his hat and gloves and led the way out of the office, locking it behind him.

"Adoniram Pepper & Co. will take a holiday to-day," he said, his old jovial smile returning. "First let us go to lunch."

They were all too hungry by this time to go far before attending to the wants of the inner man; but notwithstanding that they were so far down town, Adoniram was able to introduce them to a very comfortable looking little chop house. He also, despite their protestations, settled the checks himself, and then telephoned to Brandon's hotel and to the Marine Hospital for the luggage of both his guests to be sent to his up town residence.

"We'll go up leisurely and give the baggage a chance to get there before us," said the merchant, as they left the restaurant; "then Frances will know that company is coming."

So they saw a bit of New York for Brandon's benefit, arriving at the large, though plain looking house in which the merchant resided, just before six o'clock.

Brandon noticed, as they neared their destination, that the old sailor seemed ill at ease, and that the conversation was being mostly carried on by Mr. Pepper and himself. He did not understand this until they

were in the house, and the old merchant had gone to summon his sister to meet his guests.

Caleb seemed terribly nervous. He sat on the edge of the substantial, upholstered chair and twisted his hat between his huge hands, his face and neck of flaming hue, while his eyes were downcast, and he started at every sound.

Finally, as the merchant did not return at once, Caleb drew forth his bandanna and blew his nose furiously.

“This 'ere is terrible, isn't it, lad?” he muttered hoarsely, to Brandon, who had been eying him in great surprise.

“What is, Caleb?”

“This 'ere meeting ladies, ye know,” responded the mate of the Silver Swan in a mild roar, laboring under the delusion that he was speaking very low indeed.

“There isn't but one, Caleb,” replied Don encouragingly.

“I—I know it,” said Caleb, with a groan; “but she's—she's th' spankin'est craft ever yer see! Sails allus new and fresh, riggin' all taut—I tell ye, lad, it allus rattles me for fear I ain't all trim.”

“You look first rate, Caleb,” Brandon assured him, stifling a desire to laugh as the old seaman evidently considered the occasion so serious. “I wouldn't worry.”

“That's easy enough for *you* to say,” returned Caleb, with another shake of his head. “You wouldn't be Cap'n Horace's son if ye didn't find it all plain sailin' in a city droorin' room, same's on th'

ship's deck; but with me it's different. Oh, Lordy! she's hove in sight."

There was a rustle of silken skirts, and Brandon looked up to see Miss Frances Pepper entering the room.

She was short and plump like her brother, though of considerably less weight, and she smiled like him. But otherwise Miss Pepper was rather prim and exact in her appearance, manner, and dress. As the sailor had said "her rigging was all taut," and she looked as though she had just stepped out of a bandbox.

"My old friend, Mr. Whitherbee!" she exclaimed, holding out her hand to Caleb with unfeigned warmth.

"Wetherbee — Caleb Wetherbee, ma'am," responded Caleb, in a monotone growl, seizing the tips of the lady's fingers as though they were as fragile as glass, and he feared to crush them in his calloused palm.

"Oh, yes — Mr. Wetherbee," she replied brightly, gazing frankly into the old seaman's face, which naturally added materially to poor Caleb's confusion. "I was very sorry to hear about your illness, and am glad you have at length been released from the hospital ward."

Then she turned to Brandon who had also risen. She went up to him, and seizing both his hands imprinted a motherly kiss upon his forehead.

The youth saw that her soft brown eyes, which could not possibly look stern as could her brother's gray ones, were filled with tears.

"God bless you, my boy!" she said, in a low tone.

"I knew your father, Captain Tarr, and a very nice man he was. You are like him.

"And now, brother," added Miss Frances briskly, "if you will take Mr. Wetherbee to his room to prepare for dinner, I will show Brandon to *his* apartment. Dinner will be ready in twenty minutes."

Mr. Pepper, who had entered behind his sister, bore Caleb off as she had commanded, to a room on the lower floor, while Brandon was led up stairs by Miss Frances. The house was nicely though plainly furnished, evidences of comfort rather than of great wealth being apparent.

Everywhere, on mantel and table, and in the niches of the hall, were innumerable curiosities in the line of shells and coral brought from all parts of the world.

Miss Frances ushered Brandon into a very prettily furnished chamber on the second floor — almost too daintily furnished for a boy's room, in fact. Innumerable bits of fancy work and the like, without doubt the work of feminine fingers, adorned the place; yet all was fashioned in a style of at least twenty years back.

Above the bed, in a heavily gilded frame, was a large portrait of a young woman — not exactly a beautiful woman, but one with a very sweet and lovable face — which smiled down upon the visitor and attracted his attention at once.

Miss Frances noticed his glance, and lingered a moment at the door.

"It was our little sister Milly," she said softly. "This was her room years ago. She was more than twenty years younger than Adoniram and I."

"Then she died?" queried Don softly, still gazing up at the smiling face.

"No, she married against father's wishes. Father was a very stern, proud man; not at all like Adoniram, who, I am afraid, is not stern enough for his good," and she smiled a little; but there was moisture in her eyes as she gazed up at the portrait.

"She was a lovely girl — at least *we* thought so — and she was father's favorite, too. But she married a poor sea captain by the name of Frank, in direct opposition to father's command, and so he cast her off.

"He forbade Adoniram or me having anything to do with her, or to help her in any way, and she herself put it out of our power to do so, by going to the other side of the world with her husband. Several years later we heard of her death, and were told that there was a child; but although Adoniram has done all he could he has never been able to find this Captain Frank."

The old lady wiped her eyes before continuing.

"After father died we had this room fixed just as she used to have it, and had that picture hung there.

"Now, Brandon, I won't bother you longer. There is your satchel, which the expressman brought an hour ago. If you want anything, please ring."

Then she departed, and left the captain's son to make ready for dinner.

CHAPTER XIX

TELLING A GREAT DEAL ABOUT DERELICTS IN GENERAL

ALTHOUGH there seemed to be everything for comfort about the Pepper mansion, the habits of the household were most simple. Miss Frances was evidently a woman of very domestic tastes, and had a vital interest in all her household arrangements. Yet there appeared to be plenty of servants about.

When dinner was over, the merchant had a short conference with his manager, Mr. Marks, who always came to report on matters at the close of the day; after which he took his two guests into the library, and the all absorbing topic of the search for the Silver Swan was broached by Caleb, who had now regained some of his wonted confidence.

“This 'ere delay is a bad thing,” the old sailor declared, when Miss Frances had left them to talk the matter over. “If I hadn't been laid up all these weeks in the hospital, I sh'd ha' foller'd up the brig long before, and had the di'monds. Now we've got two — yes, three — circumstances against us.

“First and foremost is the fact that the Swan has already been afloat 'most two months, an' that's longer than the majority of derelicts last. Then these confounded cruisers may get after her any minute, which will be remarkably bad for our plans. And thirdly,

as the parsons say, there's that rascal Leroyd. He's not the man I think him if he doesn't make a break for the wreck at once."

"And he's got the papers, too," interjected Mr. Pepper.

Caleb smiled at this, but said nothing in reply, continuing his remarks:

"Now, I've seen a good many derelicts in my time — a good many — but if the Silver Swan is in the shape I think her, she's liable (setting aside accident) to float for months. And she's got lots of company, too."

"I should think these derelicts would be dreadfully dangerous," suggested Brandon, with all the curiosity of a boy about anything pertaining to sea and sea going.

"They are," declared Caleb; "more dangerous, it's likely, than anybody dreams of. Many a good ship — steamers and sailing vessels both — has doubtless gone to Davy Jones' Locker because of them. Take one o' these 'ere European steamships making time across the ocean; she strikes a derelict — a coal laden one, mebbe; they're the most dangerous — and we never hear of her again.

"I'll never forget something that happened when I was mate of the American bark Neptune, several years ago. The Neptune were a mighty speedy craft, an' Cap'n Tollman was a terror for crowding on all sail.

"We was scuddin' along one dark night before a stiff easterly gale, an' I had the deck. It was just before eight bells — half past three o'clock, mebbe —

when all to onct the man on lookout gave a yell that fairly riz my hair on end.

“‘A wreck! dead ahead!’ he yelled. ‘Down with your helm! hard down!’

“I jumped to the wheel myself an’ helped the helmsman swing ’er over. Right up before us loomed the dim, black form of a vessel — her stern under water, an’ her bowsprit straight up. I tell ye, for about two minutes I was dead sure ’twas all day with the old Neptune, and us along with her.

“However she did it I dunno, but she answered her helm quicker ’n she did afore or since. She jest shaved the wreck, some of the cordage fastened to the upright bowsprit catching in our spars an’ being torn away, an’ we slipped by without any damage. But I don’t want to have a closer shave than *that*.”

“That was a close call, Cale,” said Mr. Pepper reflectively. “I’ve a man in my employ — Richards his name is; he sails this trip as captain of the *Calypso* — who came originally from New Brunswick. A regular ‘blue-nose’ he is, and a good sailor.

“Well, he was one of the crew of the ‘*Joggins* raft’ as it was called, that left the Bay of Fundy for New York several years ago.”

“And a mighty foolish thing that was, too,” interrupted Caleb, shaking his head. “It’s a merciful Providence that that thing didn’t occasion half a dozen wrecks; but it didn’t, as far as anybody knows.”

“Richards tells a pretty thrilling story of his experience,” the merchant continued, seeing that Brandon was interested in the tale. “Lumber and coal laden derelicts are considered the most dangerous, eh,

Caleb? And this Joggins raft was probably the most perilous object that was ever set afloat.

“The raft was composed of 27,000 great tree trunks, bound together with chains, and it weighed something like eleven thousand tons. The hawsers by which it was towed, parted in a hurricane, and the raft went to pieces south of Nantasket. For a good many months the logs were reported as scattered over a great portion of the North Atlantic. As Caleb says, however, they did no damage, but the hydrographic charts during the time were plentifully decorated with them.”

“What are these hydrographic charts?” asked Brandon, with interest. “That clipping Leroyd lost and which I found, mentioned the matter of the Swan’s being reported to the Hydrographic Office at Washington. What did it mean?”

“Well,” responded Mr. Pepper, while Caleb, at the little merchant’s request, filled and smoked his evening pipe, “when these abandoned wrecks are sighted by incoming steamers, they are reported at once to the Hydrographic Office at the capitol, the latitude and longitude, name of the vessel if known, and her position in the water, being given.

“As fast as messages of this kind are received at the office they are posted on a big blackboard on which is inscribed an outline map of the North Atlantic. The position of each derelict is indicated by a pin stuck into the board, and thrust at the same time through a square scrap of paper.

“On this bit of paper is inscribed in red ink the name of the deserted craft, if it is known, together with a minute picture showing the attitude of the

vessel, whether bottom up, sunken at the stern, or what not.

"These little pictures are reproduced on the next pilot chart (which is a monthly publication), and changes are made in the chart as frequently as the derelicts are reported."

"Seems to me, 'Doniram,'" remarked Caleb, puffing away with vast content at the pipe—"seems to me you know a good deal about this derelict business."

The little man seemed strangely confused at this, and his jolly face blushed a deep red as he shifted his position restlessly.

"Well," he said slowly. "I *have* been looking it up lately. I—I had an idea—a scheme, you know—that caused me to study the matter some. Seems odd, too, doesn't it, with the matter of the Silver Swan coming right on top of it?"

But here Brandon, whose thoughts had been wandering a little, interrupted any further questioning on the sailor's part.

"I'm dreadfully sorry that that rascally Leroyd got away with the letter father wrote me," he said reflectively.

Caleb looked at him with a smile, and removed his pipe from between his lips.

"Did I say he *had* got away with it?" he said.

"Eh?" interjected Adoniram, quickly.

"What do you mean?" queried Brandon.

"See here," said Caleb, enjoying their surprise, "You've been running this pretty much by yourselves. I haven't said that the swab got away with the papers, have I?"

"For pity's sake, what *did* he steal then?" demanded Brandon, springing to his feet.

"Well," returned the mate of the Silver Swan, "by my reckoning he got an old pocketbook with some worthless bills of lading in it and about ten dollars in money—an' much good may it do him."

"Why — why —" sputtered Mr. Pepper, staring at the smiling sailor in amazement.

"Now, don't be in a hurry," urged Caleb. "I *didn't* say the papers were stolen, so don't ye accuse me o' that. Ye both jumped at that conclusion and I let you think so, for as I'd made a fool of myself once by lettin' folks know I had 'em, I reckoned I wouldn't do it again."

"But now," he added, "if ye think this is the time and place to see them papers, I can perduce 'em ter oncet."

"Where are they? Let's see 'em," urged Brandon, in excitement.

"All right, my lad. If you says the word, why here goes."

The old sailor laid his pipe down, and coolly began to unstrap his wooden leg. The implement was an old fashioned affair, consisting of a smoothly turned stick at the lower end hardly larger than a broom handle, but swelling as it rose, to the semblance of a leg.

In a moment he had it off and to the surprise of his two friends this swelled portion of the imitation limb was hollow. From this cavity he drew forth first a bulky wallet and then a package of papers wrapped in oiled paper.

"There ye be," he declared, with satisfaction. "If

I'd known about them di'monds afore we left the brig, I sh'd have had the cap'n let me hide 'em in this 'ere timber leg. Then we'd have been saved a mighty sight o' bother."

CHAPTER XX

THE CONTENTS OF SEVERAL INTERESTING DOCUMENTS

"WELL, of all things!" ejaculated Mr. Pepper, as the old sailor produced the papers from their queer repository, while Brandon burst out laughing.

"There's some reasons for being grateful for even a wooden leg," remarked Caleb grimly. "I hid those papers there when I was aboard the raft, and if I'd passed in my checks I reckon papers an' all would have gone to the sharks, for Leroyd would never have thought to look there for 'em."

Then he strapped the artificial limb in place again, and gravely handed the package to Brandon. The boy had lost all desire to laugh now, for he was in possession of the last written words of his father, and for a moment his hands trembled and his eyes filled with tears.

"Open it, my lad," said the sailor. "I haven't touched the wrapper since Cap'n Horace gave it to me."

Brandon untied the string which bound the package, and removed the oiled paper. There were several folded documents within and one was marked:

"To my son, Brandon,
Horace Tarr."

Don quickly opened the paper, recognizing the chi-rography of the dead captain at once, although much of the writing was blurred and illy formed, showing how great a tax the effort had been for the injured and dying man. It read as follows:

ON BOARD THE RAFT,
TUESDAY NOON.

MY BELOVED SON:

We have now been on this raft two days, and I feel that my end is drawing near, although my companions will doubtless escape. But I have received a terrible blow on the head, and my sufferings at times are frightful; therefore I know I am not long for this world.

Oh, that I might see you again, my son! That I might be spared to reach you, and to put into your hand the power to make you the wealthy man I should have been had I lived. But no; it could not be. Fortune has at last come to the Tarrs, but I shall not share it; your uncle Anson was not benefited by it, and death will overtake me soon, too. But you, my son, I pray may regain the fortune which I have hidden aboard the brig.

We committed a grave error in leaving the wreck; I know that now. The hull of the Silver Swan was uninjured, and she may outlast many gales. I shall put these papers into Caleb Wetherbee's hands ere I am called, and he, I know, will help you to regain the fortune which first belonged to Anson. Be guided by him, and trust him fully.

The letter from your uncle will explain all about the diamonds, and how he came in possession of them. I dared not take the gems with me from the brig, for Leroyd knew about them, or suspected their presence, and he would have killed us all for them, I fear.

But they are hidden in the steel lined closet—the one I showed you in the cabin. Caleb knows where it is. Go to the reef at once and get the jewels, before some one else gets there. There are diamonds enough to make you fabulously rich, if Anson appraised them rightly.

I am so weak that I cannot write longer.

These will probably be my last words on earth to you, my son. Live uprightly; fear God; and hold sacred your mother's memory. God bless you, my boy! Farewell!

Your loving father,

HORACE TARR.

Tears fairly blinded Don's eyes as he finished reading the missive. He passed it to Mr. Pepper, who, in turn, passed it to Caleb.

"He was a good man," declared Adoniram softly, while the old sailor blew his nose loudly, and wiped the suspicious moisture from his eyes.

"That he were!" responded the latter. "Cap'n Horace were all that he tells you to be, Don."

"Please God, I'll be worthy of his memory," said Brandon quietly. "If we are fortunate enough to obtain any of this treasure he speaks of, I hope I shall use it wisely, and as he would wish."

"Don't you fear — we'll get it, lad," Caleb assured him earnestly. "I feel it in my bones we will."

"What else was there in the package?" asked the merchant curiously.

"There were two other papers," Brandon replied. "One is my father's will."

He picked that up from his lap and opened it.

"Why," he exclaimed, "you are named as executor, Mr. Pepper."

He passed the legal document to Adoniram who adjusted the eye glasses (of which a new pair had been purchased), and examined it with manifest surprise.

"This is a legal will, as sure as I am alive!" he exclaimed. "It was drawn up at Rio by an American lawyer — a Mr. Bromley. Properly signed and witnessed."

"Well, you'll look out for it, won't you?" said Caleb, who was eager to hear the other paper — the letter from Anson Tarr to his brother — read.

"Of course. But let me tell you its contents," replied the merchant. "It is short and to the point, Caleb. *You* are given the Silver Swan, in fee simple, and everything else goes to Brandon, here."

He read the paragraph which secured all the property of which Captain Tarr had been possessed, excepting the brig, to Brandon, including "certain uncut diamonds, roughly estimated at two hundred thousand dollars."

"Two hundred thousand!" repeated Brandon, in bewilderment.

"Quite a pile, my boy," said Caleb. "That is, if we get 'em."

"And you and I, Caleb," concluded Mr. Pepper, "are joint guardians of Don."

"All right, all right," cried the impatient sailor. "But let's hear the other letter, my lad. Read it out."

Thus urged, Brandon unfolded the third paper, and read its contents aloud:

"KIMBERLEY, SOUTH AFRICA,
"November the 27th, 1891.

"BROTHER HORACE:

"Probably you have long since believed me dead, and I have given you good reason for that belief, for, if I am not mistaken, it was eight years ago, after my miserable failure at the Australian gold diggings, that I last wrote to you.

"I intended then that you should never hear from me again. I was a failure — a complete failure, I believed — and I determined to tempt fortune no further. With this intention I went to an island in the Pacific, and buried myself there,

with only natives and one other white man for company, for six years.

"Then the old roving spirit awoke in me again, and I longed to try my luck once more where other men were gaining wealth. The news of the rich finds here in the diamond fields reached even our lonely isle, and finally I could not resist the temptation longer, and came here, leaving my companion to dwell alone among the natives. I have been here now the better part of a year and, at last, have been successful!

"Two months ago I struck a pocket in the hills, and out of a trench less than two rods in length, I have dug what I believe to be at least forty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds of exceptional purity. But the diggings have now petered out.

"I kept the find a secret, and got all there was myself, excepting a small number which my black digger ran away with, and now I am afraid I shall not live to enjoy my riches.

"Perhaps it is as well. You know that riches have ever taken wings with us, and I should probably lose all in some other venture. I hope that you, Horace, will do better with them than I, for to you, brother, and to your boy, if he has lived, I bequeath the gems.

"I have been very ill now several days and the physician tells me that I am in a very bad way. Exposure to all sorts of weather in every kind of climate, is telling on me. Therefore I do write this to you, my brother, and take precaution to have the letter and the package of uncut stones sent to you.

"Nobody here knows of my find. It is safest to trust nobody in such a place as this. I propose to give the letter and the gems, all in a sealed packet, to a friend, who is the most trustworthy man I know, and have him give them to you. He will believe the package to contain nothing but papers, and therefore you will stand a good chance of getting the diamonds safely.

"Good by for this world, Horace. May the luck of the Tarrs be changed with this find of mine.

"Your brother,
"ANSON TARR."

"Well," exclaimed Caleb, with a sigh, as Brandon folded the document, "we've got the rights of it at last. Two hundred thousand dollars wuth o' di'monds — for that's what forty thousand pounds mean, I take it, eh, 'Doniram?'"

"About that," said the merchant. "You will be a very rich man, Don."

"Let's not count our chickens too soon," said the youth, trying to stifle his excitement. "It seems too bewilderingly good to be true."

"That's a good idea about not countin' our chickens," said Caleb. "But we'll have a whack at 'em just as soon as possible, my lad."

"And you'll let me furnish the vessel," the merchant added.

"Let's see," said the old sailor. "You was saying something about havin' one all ready. 'Doniram, wasn't you?'"

"One that can be ready in a week's time, any way; and the craft you want, too — a whaleback."

"I dunno," said Caleb slowly. "I don't fancy them new fangled things. What under the sun did you ever get a whaleback steamer for?"

Mr. Pepper looked at his old friend curiously, and his little eyes twinkled.

"Well," he said reflectively, "oddly enough, I purchased Number Three from the American Barge Company for the very purpose for which you wish to use it."

"What?" shouted Caleb.

"Not to go in search of the Silver Swan?" cried Brandon, in wonder.

"No, not exactly that; but to go in quest of derelicts in general."

"Another of your crazy ideas, 'Doniram!'" Caleb declared finally.

"Perhaps; but I notice that most of my 'crazy ideas' turn out pretty successfully, old Timbertoes," said the little merchant jovially. "If you'll give me a chance, though, I'll explain how I came to think of *this* 'crazy idea.'"

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH MR. PEPPER MAKES A PROPOSITION TO CALEB AND DON

“ You see,” the ship owner began, as soon as he was assured of the attention of his audience, “ I have had my eye on these whaleback steamers from the start. Three years ago, you know, nobody but Captain Alexander MacDougal, the inventor, knew anything about them.

“ We are altogether too conservative here in the East,” continued Adoniram warmly. “ It takes the Westerners to get hold of new things, and practically test them. These whalebacks are a Western idea and were first used and tested on the Great Lakes.

“ You don’t seem to realize, Caleb, that the boat was never built which could sail as easily as those whalebacks. In the heaviest gales they only roll slightly, as a log would at sea. The waves can beat against the curved steel sides of the craft as much as they like, or wash clean over her; but the boat is not affected by them in the least.”

“ It’s the most wonderful thing I ever heard of,” Brandon declared.

“ They *are* wonderful boats, as you will declare, yourself, when you see Number Three, tomorrow,” Adoniram returned. “ My whaleback is 265 feet long,

38 feet beam, and 24 feet deep. She is warranted to carry 3,000 tons of grain on a sixteen and one half foot draft. You see, for her size, she carries an enormous cargo, for between the collision bulkhead forward, and the bulkhead in front of the engine room aft, the whole inside of the craft is open for lading.

“But my scheme — the reason I bought this vessel, in fact — is this,” went on Mr. Pepper.

He hesitated a moment, and looked just a little doubtfully at Caleb.

“I presume this *is* what you will call a ‘crazy idea,’ Caleb,” he said. “Several months ago my attention was drawn to the fact that great numbers of these derelicts now afloat in the Atlantic, north of the equator, are richly laden merchant vessels on whose cargoes and hulls a large salvage might be demanded by any vessel towing them into port.

“Now and then, you know, it happens that somebody *does* recover a derelict with a valuable cargo. In these times, when the crews of American ships, and even many of the officers, are ignorant and untrustworthy fellows, lacking altogether the honor and perseverance which were characteristics of sailors forty years ago (I don’t say that *all* are so, but many) under these circumstances, I say, many a vessel which might be worked safely into port, is abandoned in mid ocean by the frightened crew.

“With a vessel like Number Three one could recover and tow into port many of these hulks, and net a large salvage from the owners. Vessels which would not be worth saving themselves, might still contain articles which it would pay to transfer to the hold

of the whaleback, before they were sunk; for it was my intention to have Number Three destroy all the wrecks which are not worth saving.

"I have even sounded the Washington officials in the matter of aiding me in the work of destroying these derelicts; but I find that the Hydrographic Office is trying to get an appropriation from Congress to build a vessel of about 800 tons burden, especially for the work of blowing up these wrecks. Until that matter is decided, of course I can get no bonus on what I do.

"Nevertheless," Mr. Pepper continued, "I believe that there is money enough in it to amply reward me for my outlay. Why, look at that New England whaler which found the British ship *Resolute* fast in the ice of Melville Bay in the summer of '55.

"She was one of three vessels sent out by the British government to find Sir John Franklin. She was 'nipped' by the ice in the winter of '51 and was abandoned. The whaler brought her to New London, and Congress bought her for \$200,000 salvage and sent her to England. Of course, I shouldn't expect to get many such prizes as that," and the little man laughed, "but I do expect to make a handsome profit on the venture."

"Take, for instance, the case of the *Silver Swan*. I'll make you a proposition, Brandon, and you see if it isn't a fair one. Caleb shall judge himself. I'll send the whaleback out after the brig at my own expense. If we are successful and find the derelict and tow her to port, I will take the cargo (I know it to be a valuable one) for my pains — of course, not including the

diamonds, which are your own personal property, my boy. The brig herself is Caleb's, any way, according to the terms of your father's will. Now what do you say?"

"I say it's a good offer!" exclaimed Caleb, slapping his thigh heartily. "You're a man and a gentleman, Adoniram. And far from thinking this scheme of yours crazy, I think well of it — mighty well."

"That's because it 'hits you where you live,' as the saying is," returned Mr. Pepper, smiling slyly.

"Oh, I don't know anything about whalebacks," began Caleb.

"But you will," the merchant declared, interrupting him. "I haven't got through with my proposition yet."

"Fire ahead, old man," said Caleb puffing steadily on his pipe.

"Well, then, first I want you for the captain of the steamer, Caleb."

"Yes, so I supposed," remarked the mate of the Silver Swan imperturbably. "What else?"

"I want Brandon for second mate."

"Me?" exclaimed Don. "Why, I never was aboard a steamship in my life."

"Oh, that doesn't make any difference, Don," returned Caleb sarcastically. "It would be just like him (if he wanted to) to send the vessel out with every blessed one of the crew landlubbers. It don't make a particle o' difference."

"Now, Caleb," said the merchant deprecatingly.

"No, Adoniram, we can't do it. The boy knows nothing at all about a steamship, and I know but little more."

"You've been mate on a steamer, Caleb."

"On a dredger, you mean," returned the old sailor, in disgust.

"There's no reason why you can't do it — both of you," the ship owner declared. "If I'm satisfied, *you* ought to be. I've already engaged Lawrence Coffin for mate."

"Coffin!" ejaculated Caleb, his face lighting up, as he forgot to pull on his pipe in his interest. "Got him, eh? Well, that puts a different complexion on the matter. I could sail the Great Eastern with Lawrence Coffin for mate."

"I thought so," said Mr. Pepper, laughing gleefully. "Then I've got a man by the name of Bolin for third. He's a good man, and knows his business, too."

"That would make Don's duties pretty light," said Caleb reflectively.

"Of course. I shall put in rather a larger crew than a whaleback usually carries — fourteen at least," Mr. Pepper added; "to handle the cargoes I shall expect the steamer to recover."

"Well, well," said Caleb, rising; "let's sleep on it. It's never best to decide on anything too quickly."

"If you'll take up with my offer," concluded the merchant, rising, too, "the craft can be made ready, and you can get away this day week."

"Let's think it over," repeated the old sailor, bound not to be hurried into the business; but Don went to bed so excited by the prospect that it was hours before he was able to sleep.

"Did a fellow *ever* have a better chance for fun and adventure?" was his last thought as he finally sank into a fitful slumber.

CHAPTER XXII

INTO BAD COMPANY

IF I were to follow up my own inclinations I should much prefer to stay in the company of Brandon Tarr and of his two good friends, the honest, hearty old seaman, Caleb Wetherbee, and the jovial, philanthropic ship owner, Adoniram Pepper. And I feel sure that the reader, too, would much prefer to remain with them.

But, for the sake of better understanding that which is to follow, I shall be obliged for a short time to request the company of the reader in entirely different scenes, and among rather disreputable characters.

Mr. Alfred Weeks, who had been in receipt of so many favors in times past from the firm of Adoniram Pepper & Co., is the first person who will receive our attention.

Weeks was "an effect of a cause." He was of the slums, his ancestry came from the slums; he was simply, by accident of education (compulsory education, by the way) once removed from the usual "gutter snipe" of the city streets.

Who his parents were, he could not, for the life of him, have told. I do not mean to suggest for an instant that Weeks was not to be pitied; but that he was deserving of pity I deny. He had been saved from

the debasing influences of the reform school in his youth by a philanthropic gentleman (who might have been the twin of Adoniram Pepper), and sent to a Western State where he was clothed, fed, and educated by a kind hearted farmer, whom he repaid by theft and by finally running away.

Then he went from one thing to another, and from place to place, and you may be sure that neither his morals nor his habits improved during the progression. Finally at twenty five, he drifted back to the metropolis, and quickly found his old level again—the slums. Here he likewise discovered many of the acquaintances of his youth, for he had been a boy of twelve when he had been sent West.

Among these old friends he was known as "Sneaky" (a very appropriate appellation, as we have seen), "Alfred Weeks" being the name given him by his Western benefactor. The fellow was a most accomplished hypocrite and it was by the exercise of this attribute that he had obtained the situation as Adoniram Pepper's clerk, and kept it for ten years, despite many of his evil deeds coming to the knowledge of the shipping merchant.

Not one of the three persons who had been in the office that afternoon when his presence in the wardrobe was discovered, realized how thoroughly bad at heart Weeks was, or how dangerous an enemy they had made. Even Caleb Wetherbee did not fully recognize it.

But they *had* made an enemy, and within twenty-four hours that enemy was at work to undermine and thwart their plans.

Weeks had overheard enough of the story of the Silver Swan and her valuable cargo to make it an easy matter for him to decide on a line of action which might lead to his own benefit, as well as to the compassing of his much desired revenge.

He solaced his wounded feelings the evening after his dismissal from the ship owner's office by a trip to his favorite resort — the Bowery Theater — where he again drank in the highly colored sentences and romantic tableaux of that great drama "The Buccaneer's Bride." Unfortunately, however, he was forced to remain standing during the play for obvious reasons; the seats of the theater were not cushioned.

The next forenoon he adorned himself in the height of Bowery style, and strolled down past the scene of his former labors and on toward that rendezvous known as the New England Hotel. He had his plans already mapped out, and the first thing to do was to join forces with Jim Leroyd, whom he knew very well by reputation, at least, as did a great many others among the denizens of lower New York.

But as he strolled along Water Street he discovered something which slightly changed his plans. Perhaps, to be exact, I should say that he discovered *somebody*.

On the opposite side of the thoroughfare was a weazen faced old man, with bowed shoulders, and not altogether steady feet. He was dressed in rusty black clothes of a pattern far remote from the present day.

Evidently he was quite confused by his surroundings and by the crowd which jostled him on the walk.

"What a chance for a 'bunco man,'" exclaimed the festive Alfred, under his breath. "That's country,

sure enough. I wonder how it ever got here all alone," and the philanthropic ex-clerk crossed the street at once and fell into the old man's wake.

Despite his countrified manner, however, there was an air of shrewd, suspicious intelligence about the man of the rusty habiliments. Fortunately for the success of his further plans, Weeks did not seek to accost him at once.

Had he done so he would have aroused the countryman's suspicions. The latter had come warned and forearmed against strangers who sought his acquaintance.

As they went along, the old man ahead and Weeks in the rear, the latter discovered that the countryman was seeking for something. He went along slowly, with his eyes fixed on the signs on either side, studying each new one as it came in view with apparent interest.

Finally he stopped on the corner of a cross street and looked about him at the rushing, hurried life in perplexity. Now was Mr. Week's chance.

He strolled slowly along toward the old fellow, the only person without an apparent object, in that whole multitude.

As the ex-clerk expected, the countryman accosted him.

"Say, mister," he said, in his harsh, cracked voice, which rose plainly above the noise of the street, "kin you tell me the whereabouts of the New England Hotel?"

"Whew!" thought Mr. Weeks. "Pretty shady lo-

cality for a respectable farmer. Wonder what the old fellow wants *there?*”

Then aloud he said:

“I’m going along there myself, sir; it is several blocks yet.”

“Wal, ‘t seems ter me,” snarled the other, taking his place by the side of Weeks, “thet this ‘ere street hain’t got no end, nor no numbers ter speak of. I looked in one o’ them things over at the hotel—a d’rectory I b’lieve the clerk called it—but I don’t see as it helped me any.”

“It’s pretty hard for a stranger to find his way about New York, that’s a fact.”

The old fellow flashed a sudden look at his companion, which was not lost on the sly Weeks. The farmer had “read up” on “bunco men” and their ways, and expected that the polite stranger would suggest showing him about the city a little.

But Weeks didn’t; he wasn’t that kind.

Finding that the fellow seemed totally uninterested as to whether he found his way about the metropolis or not, the countryman gained a little confidence in his new acquaintance.

“New York streets hain’t much like Providence streets,” he said. “Ye *kin* find yer way ‘round them; but I defy any one ter know whether they’re goin’ straight here, or not.”

Mr. Weeks smiled and nodded, but let the other do most of the talking. He went on the principle that if you give a fool rope enough he’ll hang himself; and although the old fellow thought himself exceedingly shrewd, and took pains to dodge the real

object of his visit to New York, in seeking to be pleasant to his new acquaintance he "gave the whole thing dead away," as the astute Alfred mentally expressed it.

"Ye see," said the old man. "I'm down here a-lookin for my nevvy, Brandon, who's run away from me. Nothing' else would ha' got me down here right in the beginnin' of the spring work."

Weeks started slightly, but otherwise showed no signs of special interest; but as the old fellow ran on about the terrible state he expected his affairs would be in because of his absence, Mr. Alfred Weeks did some pretty tall thinking.

"Brandon is no common name," so the ex-clerk communed with himself. "I bet there hasn't been *two* Brandons come to New York within the past few days — both from Rhode Island, too.

"This is the old uncle I heard the young chap mention. He's down here after the boy, eh? But I'm betting there's something else behind it. Now, let's see; what does he want at the New England Hotel?

"Leroyd, so young Tarr said, had been up to Rhode Island to see him." Weeks thought, continuing his train of reasoning. "Passed himself off to *him*, at least, as old Wetherbee. Oh, Jim's a keen one, he is! Now Leroyd's at the hotel — at least, he *has* been. What is this old scarecrow going there for?

"There's a great big rat in the toe of this stocking," Mr. Weeks assured himself. "This uncle is an old scamp, that's *my* opinion." (Mr. Weeks knew a scamp when he saw one — excepting when he looked

in the glass.) "I'd wager a good deal that he and Jim understand each other pretty well."

"Probably Jim has let the old fellow into the fact that there's treasure aboard that brig, hoping to get him to back him in an attempt to find it. By the cast in the old man's eye, I reckon he's always on the lookout for the almighty dollar. Now, he and Jim are going to try and hitch horses together, I bet. And am I in this? I betcher! with both feet!"

With this elegant expression, Mr. Weeks drew up before the uninviting resort known as the New England Hotel.

CHAPTER XXIII

MR. ALFRED WEEKS AT A CERTAIN CONFERENCE

"HERE we are, mister," said the ex-clerk; "see, there's the sign — New England Hotel. Did you expect to find your runaway nephew here?"

"No-o," replied old Arad Tarr, eying the place with a good deal of disfavor.

"See here," said Weeks slowly, "I've been trying to remember whereabouts I've heard that name 'Brandon' before. It's not a common name, you know."

"No, 'taint common. D'ye thing ye've seen Brandon since he's been here in New York? He's only been here two days, I reckon," said old Arad eagerly.

"Perhaps."

"Where was he?" queried the old man. "I'm his lawful guardian, an' I'm a-goin' ter hev him back, now I tell ye!"

"Let's see; his name is Brandon Tarr, isn't it?"

"That's it; that's it," Arad declared.

"And he came from Chopmist, Rhode Island?"

"Sartin. You must have seen him, mister."

"I guess I have," said Weeks reflectively. "He was the son of a Captain Horace Tarr, lost at sea on the Silver Swan not long ago, eh?"

"The very feller!" cried Arad, with manifest delight.

"Then I guess I can help you find him," declared Weeks cheerfully. "Let's go inside and I'll tell you how I happened to run across him. It's not a very nice looking place, this isn't; but they know me here, and it won't be safe for them to treat any of my friends crooked."

The old man, who had forgotten all about bunco men and their ilk in his anxiety to recover his nephew, followed him into the bar room. The place was but poorly patronized at this hour of the day, and with a nod to Brady, who, his face adorned with a most beautiful black eye, was behind the bar, Weeks led the way to an empty table in the further corner.

"What'll you an' your friend hev ter drink?" inquired Mr. Brady, with an atrocious grin.

"Oh, a bottle of sarsaparilla," responded Weeks carelessly, and when the bull necked bar keeper had brought it, the ex-clerk paid for the refreshment himself.

Old Arad had looked rather scared at the appearance of the bottle. His mind at once reverted to the stories he had read in the local paper at home (which paper he had borrowed from a neighbor, by the way) of countrymen being decoyed into dens in New York and treated to drugged liquor.

But as Weeks allowed the bottle to stand on the table between them untouched throughout their conference, the old man felt easier in his mind.

"Ye say ye've seen Brandon?" inquired Arad,

when Jack Brady had returned to his position behind the bar, and there was nobody within earshot.

"Yes. I'll tell you how it was. You see, Mr. Tarr—that's your name, isn't it?—I have a position in a shipping merchant's office as clerk. The office is—er—closed today, so I am out. This office is that of Adoniram Pepper & Co. Ever hear of them?"

Old Arad shook his head negatively.

"Pepper was a great friend of this Brandon's father, so I understand."

"Mebbe," snarled the farmer. "Cap'n Tarr's friends warn't *my* friends."

"No? Well, your nephew steered straight for Pepper's office, and I believe that he's staying at the old man's house now—he and a man by the name of Caleb Wetherbee."

"Caleb Wetherbee? Gracious Peter!" ejaculated the old man. "Hez he found *him* so soon."

Mr. Weeks nodded briefly.

"This Wetherbee was mate of the Silver Swan."

"That's the man," muttered Arad hopelessly.

"I take it you didn't want your nephew and this Wetherbee to meet?" suggested Weeks shrewdly.

"No—o—well, I dunno. I—I'm erfraid 'twont be so easy to git Brandon back ter the farm ef he's found this mate."

"Perhaps we can fix it up," said Weeks cheerfully.

"D'ye think so?"

"Let's see; are you his legal guardian?"

"Yes, I be," declared Arad savagely; "on'y the papers ain't made aout."

"I don't really see, then, how you can bring it about until you are appointed," said Mr. Weeks slowly.

"I jest kin!" asserted Arad, with confidence. "I gotter warrant here for him."

"Whew!" The astute Weeks looked at the old sinner admiringly. "Well, well! you *are* a smart one. What's the charge?"

"Robbing me," responded the old man. "The day he run away he took 'most fifty dollars outer a—a beury droor. Dretful bad boy is that Brandon."

"Yes, I should think so. Well, with that warrant I should think you had him pretty straight."

"D'ye think I kin find him all right?" asked Arad anxiously.

"If you can't, I can," responded Weeks. "I know where to put my hand on him."

At that moment a door at the rear of the room (within a few feet of the table at which they were seated, in fact) opened, and a man entered. Weeks recognized him at once as Jim Leroyd; he had seen him before, although he could claim no speaking acquaintance with him.

Old Arad also saw and recognized the new comer, and as the sailor passed along the room, he caught sight of the old farmer.

"Why, dash my toplights!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Ef here ain't Mr. Tarr!"

He stepped back to the table and grasped the old man's hand most cordially, at the same time casting a suspicious glance at Weeks. He knew the ex-clerk by reputation, as Weeks knew *him*.

"Don't ye be up ter any funny biz with this gen-

tleman, Sneaky," he said, with a scowl. "He's my friend."

"Don't you fret," responded Weeks. "He and I were talking about his nephew, Brandon Tarr, who was up to see you yesterday —"

Mr. Leroyd uttered a volley of choice profanity at this, and Arad was greatly surprised.

"Came ter see yeou?" he gasped. "Er — erbout that matter we was a-talkin' of, Mr. Leroyd? Ye know I — I'm his legal guardien —"

"Don't ye be scared, Mr. Tarr," said Weeks, who understood the circumstances pretty well, "I can vouch for Jim, here, not playing you false."

"What do you know about it, anyway?" growled Jim uglily.

"Now, sit down and keep cool, Leroyd," urged Weeks. "I know *all* about it. I know about your little scheme to gobble the — the *treasure* aboard the Silver Swan —"

"Sh!" exclaimed Leroyd fiercely. "You know too much, young feller."

"No, I know just enough, and I'll prove it to you."

"I s'pose ye think ye kin force yer way inter this, but ye're mistaken. This is the private affair o' Mr. Tarr an' me, an' I warn ye ter keep yer nose out."

He arose as he spoke, his fierce eyes fixed threateningly upon Weeks' impassive face.

"You come with me, Mr. Tarr, where we can talk the matter over privately. We don't want nothin' o' that swab."

The red headed ex-clerk fairly laughed aloud at this.

"See here, Leroyd," he said, still coolly: "you made a break for those papers yesterday, I believe. What did you get?"

"Hey?" roared the sailor.

"I said that you made a break for those papers of Cale Wetherbee's yesterday," repeated Weeks, slowly and distinctly. "Now, what did you get?"

"Not a blamed thing," responded the sailor frankly, after an instant's hesitation.

"That's what I thought. I thought Cale Wetherbee took it altogether too coolly if you *had* made a haul worth anything. Now, I could tell you something, if I thought 'twould be worth my while."

"What is it?"

"Do you know what the treasure hidden aboard the brig consists of?"

"No," replied Leroyd shortly, while old Arad gazed from one to the other in bewilderment.

"Well, I do," declared Weeks.

"Ye do?"

"Sure. I heard that Wetherbee and the boy and old man Pepper talking it over."

"Who's Pepper?" growled Leroyd.

"He's the feller who is going to back 'em in this hunt for the brig. He's going to furnish the vessel and all."

"Curses on the luck!" growled the sailor again.

Here old Arad interposed. The old man's hands were trembling violently, and his face was pale with excitement.

"We—we must stop 'em—they ain't got no right ter do it," he sputtered. "Horace Tarr was my nevvy,

an' I'm the guardeen o' that boy. There hain't nobody else got no right to go arter them di'monds."

"Diamonds!" exclaimed Leroyd. "Is *that* the treasure?"

"Ye—es," replied Arad hesitatingly, looking at Weeks. "I—I found a letter from this Wetherbee, the mate of the Silver Swan, an' it says so. Horace's brother Anson got 'em in South Afriky."

"Good for you, old feller," said Leroyd admiringly. "Ye did take my advice, didn't ye?"

Old Arad rubbed his hands together as though washing them with imaginary soap, and grinned.

"Yes, diamonds is the treasure," Weeks rejoined calmly. "Now, you'll start right off to find the brig with Mr. Tarr here to back you with money, eh, Leroyd?"

"Never ye mind *what* I'll do," returned Jim, ugly. "I tell ye this hain't none o' your funeral, so you keep out of it, Sneaky."

"Are you sure?" asked Weeks, with a tantalizing smile.

"Yes, I'm sure!" roared the enraged sailor.

"Well, don't holler so loud," the red haired one admonished him. "But I think you're mistaken."

Leroyd glared at him like an angry bulldog but said nothing.

"Now I s'pose," continued Weeks, cocking his eye at the smoke begrimed ceiling of the bar room, "that you expect to get a vessel an' go in pursuit of the Silver Swan; and that when you've got her you'll tow her in port, an' you'll have the salvage—that'll be a pretty good sum."

"And the di'monds," interjected Arad, with an avaricious chuckle.

"Oh, will you?" said Weeks with cool sarcasm. "That remains to be seen. You'll have the brig fast enough; but how'll you get the stones?"

"Why, ef we git the brig won't the diamonds be aboard her?" queried Arad.

"Yes, they will; but *where will they be*, aboard her? Can you tell me that?"

Arad's jaw fell and he stared blankly at the shrewd Weeks. Even Leroyd was visibly moved by this statement.

"You don't know where the diamonds are hidden," continued Weeks, pursuing his advantage. "You might tear that whole brig to pieces an' not find 'em, *but I know just where they are and I can put my hand right on 'em!*"

"You kin?" gasped old Arad.

"Is that straight, Sneaky?" demanded Leroyd, with interest.

Weeks nodded calmly.

"I believe you're lying," the sailor declared.

"Well you can think so if you want to," said the ex-clerk, rising, "and I'll go now and find somebody to go in with me on this scheme, and I'll run my chances of getting to the brig first. You can have the old hulk and welcome after I've been aboard her five minutes, Leroyd.

"But, if you'll let me in on the ground floor of this," he continued, "and give me one third of all there is in it, why all right. If you don't, probably you'll get nothing, while me and the other fellow'll get it *all*," and Mr. Weeks smiled benignantly upon his audience.

CHAPTER XXIV

HOW A NEFARIOUS COMPACT WAS FORMED

"But yeou can't do that!" cried old Arad Tarr, the first to break the silence after Mr. Weeks had delivered what might be termed his "ultimatum." "There hain't anybody got airy right ter go arter them di'monds, but them I send."

"That is where you make an error, Mr. Tarr," responded Weeks cheerfully. "This is what is called 'treasure trove;' the fellow who gets there first has the best right to it."

"It ben't so, is it?" whined the old man, appealing to Leroyd.

"Yes, I s'pose it is," admitted the sailor, with a growl. "He's got us foul, old man."

"Now, don't talk that way, Leroyd," exclaimed Weeks briskly. "We three must strike hands and share evenly in this thing. You need me, any way, though I can get along without either of you; for you know it wouldn't take me long to find a man to back me with a couple of hundred dollars against the chance of winning thousands."

"Well, you're right," said the sailor, seeing that it would be for his advantage to make terms with "Sneaky Al," as the red haired Weeks was familiarly called.

"Two hundred dollars is an awful lot of money ter risk," muttered old Arad, knowing that he was the one who would be expected to furnish the "sinews of war."

"Tain't much compared with mebbe three hundred thousand dollars. I heered Cap'n Tarr say, myself, that there was enough o' them di'monds, ter make a man fabulously rich," responded Leroyd quickly. "That'd be a clean hundred thousand for each of us."

"But ef I furnish the money I'd oughter hev more o' th' returns," declared the farmer, who was quite as sharp as either of his companions.

"Come, we won't quarrel over that," the sailor declared, rising again. "But we want to talk this matter over where it's more quiet like. I've got a room here. Let's go up to it, where we shan't be disturbed."

"Now you're talking sense," Weeks declared, rising gingerly from the chair in which he had again seated himself.

At that instant Mr. Brady, who had been kept busy at the bar by transient customers for the past half hour, called Leroyd over to him.

"Now, look a-here, Jim," he said, in a hoarse aside, "wot be you an' Sneaky Al up to? Dere ain't goin' ter be no game played on dat countryman here, see? Ye got me inter 'nough trouble yest'day. Ef I hadn't a pull in dis ward, dey'd er — nabbed me, sure."

"Don't you fret, Jack," responded Leroyd reassuringly. "We ain't inter any bunco business. The old man knows what he's about, ef he *does* look like a hayseed. Ef he don't do *us*, it'll be lucky."

"Well, what's de game?" Brady demanded.

"Never you mind, old man. We're just going up stairs for a private confab, an' ef things turn out right, I kin promise a cool hundred for keeping your mouth shut. Savey?"

Brady nodded.

"I'm mum," he said, with satisfaction. "On'y I don't want dem cops down on me ag'in, so mind yer eye."

Armed with a bottle and glasses, Leroyd led the way into a small room a good deal nearer the roof of the building, in which the New England Hotel was located. His two companions, however, left the sailor to dispose of the refreshments alone; the old farmer because he had never used liquor in any shape at home, and Weeks because he proposed to keep his brain perfectly clear that he might be sure to retain the "whip hand" of the other conspirators.

It is not my purpose to report verbatim the plans of the three villains. Let it suffice to say that after much discussion, and by virtue of coaxings, threatenings, promises, and what not, the sailor and Weeks (who saw at once that it would be for their mutual advantage to play into each other's hands) obtained old Arad Tarr's consent to furnish them with the sum of over two hundred dollars (and more if it was found to be actually needed) with which to charter the vessel.

You may be sure that the two rascals never worked harder (with their tongues) for two hundred dollars in their lives, for the amount looked as large to old Arad as ten thousand would to almost any other man.

The plot of the conspirators likewise included the discovery of Brandon's whereabouts and his arrest on the charge of robbery, as set forth in the warrant with which Arad supplied himself before he left Rhode Island. This part of the scheme Weeks proposed to attend to.

Then, with a great deal of flourish and legal formula, the astute Mr. Weeks drew up a most wonderful document (he was well versed in legal phrases), which bound each of the three, Arad Tarr, James Leroyd, and Alfred Weeks, to a co-partnership, the object of which was to seek and obtain the floating hulk of the Silver Swan, and the treasure thereon, the profit of the venture to be divided equally between them, excepting the sum of one thousand dollars which was to go to Arad Tarr under *any* circumstances. And, of course, the document wasn't worth the paper on which it was written.

But the old man didn't know this. He was a great worshiper of the law, and he trusted in the legality of the paper to hold his partners to their promises. He lost sight, however, of the fact that the two men were going together on the quest for the Silver Swan, and that he—well, *he* was to stay at home, and *wait*. Waiting isn't very hard work, to be sure; but it is terribly wearing.

These several things having been accomplished, and it being long past noon, the conspirators went their different ways—old Arad to interview the brokerage firm of Bensell, Bensell & Marsden, which, he was sure, was cheating him out of his dividends: Weeks to hunt up a scaly friend of his to serve the warrant

upon unsuspecting Brandon; and Leroyd to look about for a vessel which could be converted to their purpose in the shortest possible time.

And now, let us return to Brandon and his two good friends, Caleb Wetherbee and Adoniram Pepper, and find out how much progress *they* have made in the quest of the Silver Swan.

CHAPTER XXV

UNCLE ARAD MAKES AN ANNOUNCEMENT

IF Caleb Wetherbee passed as sleepless a night as did his young friend, Brandon, he showed no signs of it when he appeared the next morning. They were a very jolly party indeed at the breakfast table, for the old sailor had recovered, to some extent at least, his equanimity when in the presence of Miss Frances.

“Now, Caleb, have you decided to accept my offer of last evening?” Adoniram inquired, as they arose after the meal.

“Let’s see the steamer,” returned the sailor, non-committally; so the merchant and his two guests went down to the docks at once.

To a person who has never seen a whaleback steamer, the first view of one is certainly a most surprising sight. He is at once reminded of Jules Verne’s great story of the *Nautilus*, the wonderful steel ship which could sail equally well below and upon the surface of the ocean.

Number Three was more than two hundred feet in length, and was shaped like a huge cigar, the blunt end, oddly enough, being the bow. This blunt “nose” is what suggested the term “pig,” as applied to the whalebacks when first they appeared on the Great Lakes.

At the forward end of the steamer a turret arose from the curved deck, furnished with one of the American Ship Windlass Co.'s steam windlasses (with the capstan above), and with hand steering gear, the shaft and hub of the wheel being of brass to avoid affecting the compass.

The cabin aft, which was fifteen feet above the deck, and therefore presented a most astonishing appearance, was supported by two turrets, and several strong ventilating pipes, the latter connecting with the engine room, fire hold, and cargo hold.

A low rail ran from bow to stern of the steamer, on either side, inclosing the turrets within its shelter, thus making it possible for the crew to go from the aft to the forward turrets.

The deck, however, was so curved that the feat would not be easy to perform in rough weather, if the whaleback *did* roll as do other vessels.

"Ye call that a steamer, do ye?" demanded Caleb, in disgust, when he first caught sight of Number Three; but after he had gone aboard, and seen and understood the advantages the whaleback possessed over the other seagoing craft, he no longer scoffed.

Adoniram first led them to the officers' quarters. These were finished in oak, and furnished almost as sumptuously as the cabin of a fancy yacht. The suite contained a dining room of comfortable size, and a chart room and offices on the port side of the cabin.

Below deck were the quarters of the crew, forward and aft, and they were as comfortable as those on a palatial ocean steamship.

"It's a wonderful boat," Brandon declared, as they examined the engine.

"It is that," the ship owner assented. "I paid a pretty penny for her, but she's worth it — every cent. She'll outride any gale that ever blew, as long as you keep her in deep water. 'Twould be hard to sink her."

"In the matter of ballast," he continued, "there are arrangements for carrying eight hundred ton of water — water is used altogether for ballast in these whale-backs. Then the engines are of the newest build, too, you see."

"The steam is generated from these two steel boilers, each eleven and a half feet in diameter by the same in length, possessing a working pressure of one hundred and twenty-five pounds. If the engine goes back on you, you will have to get out the oars and row ashore, for there is no chance for raising a sail," and the jolly ship owner laughed good naturedly.

"Well, I've been to sea on a good many craft — most anything that would float, in fact, from a torpedo boat to a Chinese junk — but this takes the bun," Caleb declared as they stepped upon the dock again.

"Then I take it you'll try your hand at this?" Adoniram asked slyly.

"Oh, yes, I s'pose so, Pepperpod — and the boy, too. By the way, does Lawrence Coffin know anything about this craft?"

"He went to West Superior (where she was built) and came down in her," declared the merchant.

"It's all right, then. He'll know what to do if we get to sea and the blamed thing should roll over."

But despite the fact that he scoffed at the vessel,

Caleb set to work with his customary energy to make ready for the voyage.

The ship owner gave him *carte blanche* to provision the whaleback and secure the crew. The engineers and firemen were already engaged and the work of making ready for sea went on rapidly.

Caleb being a worker himself, expected a good deal of everybody about him and Brandon found himself with plenty to do during the next two days. He ran errands, and bought provisions under the old sailor's directions, and saw to the storing away of the articles purchased.

On the morning of the third day, however, came an interruption, and one which promised to be most serious.

In these times of hurried preparation Caleb and his young second mate made the Water Street office of Adoniram Pepper & Co. their headquarters. They were in and out of the place a score of times a day to the satisfaction of Adoniram, but, if the truth were told, to the great annoyance of the solemn faced young man whom Mr. Marks had sent up from the other office to take the place of the departed Weeks.

About ten o'clock on this forenoon Brandon ran in to see if he could find Caleb, as that individual was not at the dock where lay the whaleback, and where the boy had expected to meet him.

"Where do you suppose he has gone?" Don asked of Mr. Pepper, who, good soul, seemed to have no other business on hand but the getting ready of the steamer.

"I don't know, I'm sure. You'd better sit down,

my boy, and wait for him," advised Adoniram kindly. "He's sure to turn up here, first or last."

So Brandon sat down, striving to stifle his impatience. He had not waited ten minutes, however, when the door of the outer office was opened, and somebody entered.

"Here he is now," exclaimed the youth, thinking he heard Caleb's voice.

He threw open the door between the two offices, gave one glance into the apartment beyond, and staggered to the nearest chair in utter amazement.

"Great Peter! it's Uncle Arad!" he gasped, in answer to Adoniram's questioning exclamation, and the next instant Uncle Arad himself appeared at the open portal of the private office.

"Thar ye air, ye young reskil!" exclaimed the old man, shaking his bony fore-finger at the youth.

Behind him was another man—a clean shaven, foxy looking fellow, who, when old Arad had pointed the boy out, stepped quickly into the room.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Brandon, recovering in part from his surprise. "Who'd have thought of seeing *you* here, Uncle Arad!"

"Not yeou, I warrant!" cackled the old man shrilly. "I s'pose ye thought ye c'd git off scott free with yer ill gotten gains, didn't ye?"

"What?"

Brandon's face flamed up redly, and he sprang to his feet in rage.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Don't ye let him escape, officer!" the farmer exclaimed, shrinking back. "He's quick's a cat."

But here Adoniram took a hand in the proceedings.

"I should like to know, sir, what you mean by this?" he said, his gray eyes flashing behind the tip tilted eye glasses. "Brandon is under *my* care, sir, and I will not allow such remarks to be addressed to him."

No one would have believed that it was the jolly Adoniram, to see his face now. The habitual smile had disappeared entirely.

"I dunno who yeou be," Arad replied defiantly; "but I kin tell ye who I be, purty quick. I'm Arad Tarr; this young reskil here is my nevvy; an' I'm his nateral an' lawful guardeen."

"Ah!" said Mr. Pepper, with quiet sarcasm. "So you are his guardian, are you? How long since?"

"How long since?" repeated the old man, in a rage. "I'll show ye! I've *allus* been his guardeen — leastways, since his pa died."

"Which occurred a little over two months ago," said Adoniram briefly. "Now, Mr. Tarr, for I suppose that is your name, where are your papers making you this lad's guardian? Who appointed you?"

"I'm his nateral guardeen now," old Arad declared slowly; "but I'm goin' to be 'p'intaed by the court."

"What court?"

"The Court o' Probate, o' Scituate, R. I.," responded the farmer pompously.

"Well, I think not," said Adoniram, who was probably never more angry in his life than at that moment. "You have made a slight mistake, Mr. Tarr."

"Hey?" returned the farmer, growing red in the face, and looking daggers at the little merchant.

"I say you have made a slight mistake. You will

not be appointed guardian of Brandon, by any court in the land. Did it ever occur to you that Captain Horace Tarr might have made a will?"

"A will?" gasped the old man.

"Yes, sir, a will."

"But he didn't hev nothin' ter will, 'ceptin ——"

"Well, excepting what?" Mr. Pepper demanded, as the other hesitated.

"Nothin'."

"Well, he *did* have something to will, and he appointed me joint guardian, with another gentleman, and *you*, Mr. Tarr, are *not* the party named to assist me. We have already made application in the New York courts to have the appointment allowed and the will has been presented for probate."

"I — I don't believe it!" shouted Arad.

"You're not obliged to. But that doesn't affect the facts of the case, just the same."

For a moment the farmer was quite nonplussed: but then he looked at the man he had brought with him again, and his faith revived.

"Ye can't escape me this way, ye young varmint!" he exclaimed, turning upon Brandon as though he were some way at fault for the wrecking of his plans. "Mebbe I hain't your guardien, but I've power 'nough right here ter lug ye back ter Scituate an' put yer through fur stealin' that money."

"What money?" demanded Brandon, white with rage. "To what do you refer?"

"That fifty dollars ye stole f'om me — that's what I mean," old Arad declared. "Th' money ye stoled f'om my beury droor. I gotter warrant right here fur ye, 'n' this officer ter serve it!"

CHAPTER XXVI

CALEB WETHERBEE OBSTRUCTS THE COURSE OF THE LAW

BRANDON was fairly paralyzed by Uncle Arad's announcement. He had realized that the old man was sorely disappointed at his inability to keep him on the farm. He had not, however, believed he would follow him clear to New York, and hatch up such a scheme as this to get him again in his power.

"You old scoundrel!" he exclaimed, too enraged for the moment to remember that he was speaking to a man whose age, if not his character, should command his respect.

"Hush, Don," commanded Adoniram Pepper admonishingly. "It will not better matters to vituperate. Mr. Tarr," he added, turning to the farmer, "do you realize what a serious charge you have made against your nephew?"

"I reckon I do," Arad declared with vigor. "I got it all down here on er warrant—Squire Holt made it aout hisself. I'm er-goin' ter hev that boy arrested for burglarizing me. Now you go erhead, Mr. Officer, an' arrest him."

"Wait a moment," and Adoniram stepped quickly in front of Don before the foxy looking man could lay his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

"Let me see that warrant?" he said.

The officer passed the paper over with a flourish, and Adoniram examined it closely.

"Why," he exclaimed, shortly, "this is returnable to the Rhode Island courts."

"Of course it is," snarled old Arad.

"But do you propose taking the boy back to Rhode Island?"

"Yes, I do."

"But can't this be settled here, officer?" asked Adoniram nervously, knowing that any such delay as this would ruin their plans for an early start after the Silver Swan.

"No, sir; the robbery was committed in Rhode Island — it must be tried there," replied the officer, with a crafty smile.

Adoniram handed the warrant back in utter bewilderment; but at that juncture the door opened again, and Caleb Wetherbee himself stumped in.

"Hey! what's this?" the old seaman demanded, seeing instantly that something was up.

Old Arad tried to shrink out of sight behind the officer's back as he viewed Caleb's fear inspiring proportions.

"This is my *dear* Uncle Arad, Caleb," Brandon hastened to say, "and he has come all the way from Rhode Island to arrest me and take me back."

"For what?" cried Caleb, aghast.

"For robbing him; so he says. Isn't he kind?"

Brandon was fairly furious, but he trusted in the old seaman to get him out of his relative's clutches.

"Robbing him!"

Caleb's face grew red with rage.

"What d'ye mean, ye old scamp?"

"He *hez* robbed me," Arad shrieked.

"See here," Caleb said coolly, "this looks to me like petty persecution, don't it to you, 'Doniram? I reckon the courts would see it that way, too."

"The courts'll send that reskil ter the State reform school — that's what they'll do," Arad declared.

"So it's locking him up you're after, eh?" returned Caleb. "Now, Brandon, don't you worry about this. We kin have it fixed up in no time."

"But the boy's got to be taken to Rhode Island," exclaimed Adoniram. "It will be a matter of weeks."

"Weeks?" roared Caleb. "Why, the steamer sails Tuesday. He can't go."

"I guess, mister, that you won't have much to do with it," remarked the man with the warrant officiously. "This warrant is returnable to the Rhode Island courts, and to Rhode Island he must go. If the boy had wanted to go on a voyage he shouldn't have stolen the money."

Caleb actually roared at this and shook his huge fist in the fellow's face. Adoniram hastened to keep the peace.

"How do we know you are an officer?" he demanded sternly. "This is a most atrocious action on Mr. Tarr's part, and for all we know you may be party to it."

The officer smiled slyly, and throwing back his coat showed his badge.

"I'm a dep'ty sheriff an' don't you fear," he said. "The boy must come along."

But as he reached out to clutch Don, the big sailor seized the youth and whirled him in behind him, placing himself between the officer and his prisoner.

"Don't be too fast," he said.

"Do you dare resist arrest?" the officer demanded angrily.

"Nobody's resisted you, yet."

His huge bulk, however, barred all approach to Don, who was now between all the others and the outer door.

"If you arrest this boy you'll seriously inconvenience our plans, an' we'll make you sweat for it, now I tell ye."

"I don't care; I'm er — goin' ter hev him took up!" shrieked old Arad, to whom all this delay was agonizing.

"You shut that trap of yours!" roared Caleb, turning upon the old man in a fury. "Don't ye dare open it ag'in wile ye're here, or there'll be an assault case in court, too."

Old Arad dodged back out of range of the sailor's brawny fist with great celerity.

"Do —— don't ye let him tetch me, officer," he implored, jerking his bandanna from the pocket of his shiny old black coat, and wiping his face nervously.

With the handkerchief came forth a letter which fell at Mr. Pepper's feet; but for the moment nobody but the merchant himself saw it.

Brandon, who was directly behind the seaman, leaned forward and whispered something in Caleb's ear. The old seaman's face lit up in an instant, and he changed his position so that his burly form com-

pletely blocked the doorway leading into the outer office.

"So you won't settle this thing out o' court, eh?" he demanded.

The officer shook his head.

"It's gone too far," he said.

"It has, hey?" Caleb exclaimed in wrath. "Well, so've *you* gone too far." Then he exclaimed, turning to Don: "Leg it, lad! We'll outwit the land-lubber yet."

"Hi! stop him! stop him!" shrieked Uncle Arad, for at the instant Caleb had spoken, Don had darted back to the street door and thrown it open.

"Good by, Uncle Arad!" the captain's son cried mockingly. "I'll see you when I've returned from the West Indies."

He was out in a moment, and the door slammed behind him.

The deputy sheriff sprang forward to follow, but Caleb managed to get his wooden leg in the way, and the officer measured his length on the office floor, while Uncle Arad, fairly wild with rage, danced up and down, and shrieked for the police.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEREIN BRANDON TARR CONCEALS HIMSELF

THE doughty deputy sheriff was on his feet in an instant, and with a wrathy glance at Caleb, dashed out of the office after the fleeing Brandon. If he did not make the arrest he would fail to get his money, and he did not propose to lose that.

But Uncle Arad could not get to the door without passing Caleb and he hardly dared do that. Just then the big seaman looked in no mood to be tampered with. The farmer, however, *did* sputter out something about having the law on everybody in general.

“Bring on all the law you want to, you old scarecrow,” responded Caleb, vigorously mopping his face. “I reckon we kin take care of it. What ye got there, Adoniram?”

Mr. Pepper had picked up the letter which had fallen from old Arad’s pocket, and was looking at the superscription in a puzzled manner.

Arad caught sight of the epistle as quickly as did Caleb.

“That’s mine! give it here!” he cried, making a snatch at the paper.

But Adoniram held it out of his reach.

“I don’t see how you make that out, Mr. Tarr,” he said quietly. “This letter is not addressed to you.

It is in *your* handwriting, Caleb, and is addressed to 'Master Brandon Tarr, Chopmist, Rhode Island.'

"Oh, you swab!" exclaimed the old tar, with a withering glance of contempt at old Arad, as he seized the letter. "This 'ere's what I wrote the boy w'en I was in the hospital — w'ich same he never got. Now, how came *you* by it? You old land shark!"

Arad was undeniably frightened. Although he might explain the fact of his opening Don's letter as eminently proper, to himself, he well knew that he could not make these friends of his nephew see it in the same light.

"I — I — it came arter Brandon went away," he gasped in excuse.

"It did, hey?" exclaimed Caleb suspiciously.

Mr. Pepper took the envelope again and examined the postmark critically.

"Hum — um," he said slowly, "postmarked in New York on the third; received on the afternoon of the fourth at the Chopmist post office. I'm afraid, my dear sir, that that yarn won't wash."

Uncle Arad was speechless, and looked from one to the other of the stern faced men in doubt.

"He — he was my nevvy; didn't I hev a right ter see what he had written ter him?"

"You can bet ye didn't," Caleb declared with confidence, and with a slight wink at Adoniram. "Let me tell ye, Mr. Tarr, that openin' other folks' correspondence is actionable, as the lawyers say. I reckon that you've laid yourself li'ble to gettin' arrested yourself, old man."

"Ye — ye can't do it," sputtered Arad.

"If that monkey of a sheriff finds Brandon (w'ich same I reckon he won't), we'll see if we can't give *you* a taste of the same medicine."

The old man was undeniably frightened and edged towards the door.

"I guess I better go," he remarked hesitatingly. "I dunno as that officer'll be able ter ketch thet reskil."

"No, I don't b'lieve he will myself," Caleb declared. "And if you want to keep your own skin whole, you'd best see that he doesn't touch the lad."

Old Arad slunk out without another word, and the two friends allowed him to depart in contemptuous silence.

When he had disappeared Adoniram turned to the sailor at once.

"Where has Don gone, Caleb?" he asked anxiously.

"You've got me. He told me he was goin' to skip, and for us to go ahead with the preparations for getting off next week, just the same. He'd lay low till the old scamp had given it up, and then slip aboard the steamer. Oh, the boy's all right."

"He is, if that sheriff doesn't find him," said the merchant doubtfully.

"I'll risk that," responded Caleb, who had vast confidence in Brandon's ability to take care of himself.

But Adoniram shook his head.

"New York is a bad place for a boy to be alone in. Where will he go?"

"Down to the pier, I reckon, and hide aboard the steamer. I'll agree to put him away there so that no measly faced sheriff like *that* fellow can find him."

"It's a bad business," declared Mr. Pepper, shaking his head slowly. "If he hadn't run off there might have been some way of fixing it up so that he wouldn't have had to go back to Rhode Island, and thus delay the sailing of the steamer. We might have scared the uncle out of prosecuting him. He was badly frightened as it was."

Caleb gazed at his friend for several moments with a quizzical smile upon his face.

"Do you know, Adoniram," he said at length, "I b'lieve you're too innocent for this wicked world."

"How do you mean?" asked the merchant, flushing a little, yet smiling.

"Well, you don't seem to see anything fishy in all this."

"Fishy?"

"Yes, fishy," returned Caleb, sitting down and speaking confidentially. "Several things make me believe that you (and me, too) haven't been half awake in this business."

"I certainly do not understand you," declared Adoniram.

"Well, give me a chance to explain, will you?" said the sailor impatiently. "You seem to think that this old land shark of an uncle of the boy's is just trying to get him back on the farm, and has hatched up this robbery business for that purpose? I don't suppose you think Don stole any money from him, do you?" he added.

"Not for an instant!" the merchant replied emphatically.

"That's what I thought. Well, as I say, you sup-

pose he wants Brandon back on the farm — wants his work, in fact?"

"Ye — es."

"Well, did it ever strike you, 'Doniram,'" Caleb pursued, with a smile of superiority on his face — "did it ever strike you that if he was successful in proving Brandon guilty, the boy would be locked up and then *nobody* would get his valuable services — nobody except the State?"

"Why, that's so."

"Of course it's so."

"Then, what is his object in persecuting the poor lad? Is he doing it just out of spite?"

"Now, see here; does that look reasonable? Do you think for a moment that an old codger like him — stingy as they make 'em — d'ye think he'd go ter the expense o' comin 'way down here to New York out of revenge simply? Well, I guess not!"

"Then, what is he up to?" demanded Adoniram, in bewilderment.

"Well, of that *I'm* not sure, of course; but," said Caleb, with vehemence, "I'm willing to risk my hull advance that he's onter this di'mond business.

"Why, Pepper, how could he help being? Didn't he get that letter of mine, an' didn't I give the hull thing away in it, like the blamed idiot I was? Man alive, a sharper like that feller would sell his immortal soul for a silver dollar. What *wouldn't* he do for a big stake like this?"

"But — " began Adoniram.

"Hold on a minute and let me finish," urged Caleb. "That scoundrel Leroyd was up to Chopmist, mind ye.

Who knows but what he an' old Arad Tarr have hitched hosses and gone inter this together? I haven't told either you or Brandon, for I didn't want to worry you, but I learned yesterday that Jim is tryin' ter charter a craft of some kind — you an' I know what for.

"He's got no money; what rascal of a sailor ever has? He must have backing, then. And who is more likely to be the backer than the old sharper who's just gone out of here! I tell ye, 'Doniram, *they're after them di'monds*, and it behooves us ter git up an' dust if we want ter beat 'em."

The ship owner shook his head unconvinced.

"You may be right, of course, Caleb; I don't say it is an impossibility. But it strikes me that your conclusions are rather far fetched. They are not reasonable."

"Well, we'll see," responded the old seaman, pursing up his lips. "I shall miss Brandon's help — a handier lad I never see — but he will have to lay low till after the whaleback sails."

He went back to the work of getting the steamer ready for departure, expecting every hour that Brandon would appear. But the captain's son did not show up that day, nor the next.

Monday came and Number Three was all ready for sailing. Her crew of twenty men, beside the officers, were aboard.

The first and third mates were likewise present, the former, Mr. Coffin, being a tall, shrewd looking, pleasant faced man, who eternally chewed on the end of a cigar (except when eating or sleeping) although he was never seen to light one; and Mr. Bolin, the third,

a keen, alert little man who looked hardly older than Brandon himself.

But Brandon did not come. The new captain of the whaleback, and the owner himself, were greatly worried by the boy's continued absence.

They had already set on foot inquiry for the youth's whereabouts, but nothing had come of it.

They did discover that Uncle Arad had gone back to Rhode Island, and gone back alone. The "scaly" ward politician who held the onerous position of deputy sheriff, and who had sought to arrest the boy, had not been successful, Brandon's friends knew, for the man haunted the pier at which the whaleback lay, day and night.

"If he don't come tonight, Adoniram," Caleb declared, "we shall sail in the morning, just the same—and that by the first streak of light, too. *You* will be here, and I can trust you to look out for the lad. *I* must be away after those di'monds. Don'll turn up all right, I know right well; and we mustn't let them swabs get ahead of us, and reach the brig first."

He had taken the precaution ere this to have his own and Brandon's effects brought down to the boat. He was ready, in fact, to cast off and steam away from the dock at a moment's notice.

As the evening approached Caleb ordered the fires built under the boilers, and everything to be made ready for instant departure. Adoniram Pepper came down after dinner and remained in the whaleback's cabin, hoping to see Brandon once again before the steamer sailed.

Caleb was too anxious to keep still at all, but

tramped back and forth, occasionally making trips to the wheelman's turret in which he had stationed Mr. Coffin and one of the sailors, so as to have no delay in starting, no matter what should happen.

"By Jove, this beats blockade running at Savannah in the sixties," muttered the first mate, after one of his commander's anxious trips to the forward turret to see that all was right. "This youngster they're taking all this trouble for must be a most remarkable boy."

"There's two fellows watching the steamer from the wharf," Caleb declared, entering the cabin again.

Just then there was a sound outside, and a heavy knock sounded at the cabin door. Caleb pulled it open in an instant.

Without stood three burly police officers.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Pepper, in wonder.

"What do you want?" Caleb demanded, inclined to be a little combative.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the spokesman of the two, nodding respectfully to Mr. Pepper, "but we've been sent to search the steamer for a boy against whom this man holds a warrant," and the officer motioned to a third individual who stood without. It was the deputy sheriff.

"Very well," said Mr. Pepper quietly.

"Search and be hanged," growled Caleb, glowering at the man with the warrant. "If you can find him you'll have better luck than we."

He refused to assist them in any way, however, and Mr. Bolin politely showed the party over the whole steamer. But of course, they found not a sign of Brandon.

After nearly an hour's search the officers gave it up and departed, Caleb hurling after them several sarcastic remarks about their supposed intellectual accomplishments — or rather, their lack of such accomplishments.

The deputy sheriff, whose name was Snaggs, by the way, would not give it up, however, but still remained on the wharf.

Mr. Coffin, who had begun to take a lively interest in the proceedings, was pacing the inclined deck of the whaleback on the side furthest from the pier, a few minutes past midnight (everybody on board was still awake at even this late hour) when his ear caught the sound of a gentle splash in the black waters just below him.

He stopped instantly and leaned over the rail.

“Hist!” whispered a voice out of the darkness.
“Toss me a rope. I want to come aboard.”

Mr. Coffin was not a man to show his emotions, and therefore, without a word, he dropped the end of a bit of cable into the water, just where he could see the faint outlines of the owner of the voice.

Hidden by the wheelhouse from the view of anybody who might be on the wharf, he assisted the person aboard, and in a minute the mysterious visitor stood upon the iron plates at Mr. Coffin's side.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DEPARTURE OF THE WHALEBACK, NUMBER THREE

No emergency was ever too great for Lawrence Coffin. The appearance of the stranger whom he had lifted over the rail to the steamer's deck may have surprised him; but he gave no visible sign.

The instant the fellow was on his feet, Mr. Coffin slid open the door of the wheelhouse and pushed the newcomer in.

"Jackson," he said sharply, to the man inside, "go for Captain Wetherbee."

Then he turned to the dripping figure that stood just within the door of the turret.

The stranger was a youth of fifteen or sixteen, with a sharp, intelligent face, and his saturated clothing was little more than rags.

"Hullo!" said the mate, "*you're* not Brandon Tarr, I take it."

"You kin bet on that, mister," responded the youth grinning. "An' you, I reckon, ain't Cale Wetherbee. He's got a wooden leg."

"I've sent for Mr. Wetherbee," replied Mr. Coffin. "What do you want?"

"I'll tell th' boss, wot I was told ter see," declared the fellow shrewdly.

The youth was evidently of that great class of indi-

viduals known as "street gamins" who, in New York City, are numbered by the thousand.

He was thin and muscular, quick in his movements, and his eyes were shifty and uneasy, not from any lack of frankness or honesty, perhaps, but because his mode of life forced him to be ever on the watch for what might "happen next."

Mr. Coffin had hardly made this mental inventory of the fellow, when Caleb, accompanied by Mr. Pepper, came forward. The strange youth evidently recognized the captain of the whaleback at once as the individual he wished to see.

"You're Captain Wetherbee," he said quickly fumbling in the inside of his coarse flannel shirt (the shirt and trousers were all he had on) "I got somethin' fur you from Brandon Tarr."

"Where is he?" cried Mr. Pepper, in great excitement.

"He's gone to sea, boss," responded the boy calmly.

"Hey!" roared Caleb, and then the messenger brought forth that which he was fumbling for—a little waterproof matchbox.

"Gone to sea?" repeated Adoniram, in bewilderment.

"Dat's it," said the boy. "He went day 'fore yest'day mornin' in de Success."

But Caleb had opened the matchbox and drawn forth the folded paper it contained.

"It's a letter—the young rascal! Why didn't he come himself?"

"Didn't I tell ye he'd gone ter sea?" demanded the youth in disgust.

"Listen to this," exclaimed Caleb, paying not the least attention to the messenger's words, and he read the closely written page aloud:

"DEAR CALEB—Swivel is going to make a break with this letter for me, although the Success sails, we understand, in an hour or two. He can tell you how I came aboard here, so I won't stop to do that.

"What I want to say is, that Leroyd is aboard and that the brig will touch at Savannah for Mr. Pepper's old clerk, Mr. Weeks, who is in the plot to find the Silver Swan, too. I shall leave her at Savannah if it is a possibility.

"If you get into Savannah while she is there, however, and I don't appear, try to find some way of getting me out. I'm afraid of Leroyd—or, that is, I should be if he knew I was here.

"I've got enough to eat and drink to last me a long time and am comfortable. I can make another raid on the pantry, too, if I run short.

"Look out for Swivel; he's a good fellow. He can tell you all that I would like to, if space and time did not forbid.

"Yours sincerely,

"BRANDON TARR.

"P. S. We'll beat these scamps and get the Silver Swan yet."

"Well, well!" commented Mr. Pepper, in amazement. "What will that boy do next?"

"The young rascal!" Caleb exclaimed in vexation. "What does he mean by cutting up such didoes as this? Aboard the very vessel the scoundrels have chartered, hey?"

"But how did he get there?" cried Adoniram wonderingly.

"This young man ought to be able to tell that," suggested Mr. Coffin, referring to the dripping youth. Caleb looked from the open letter to the boy.

"So you're Swivel, eh?" he demanded.

The lad grinned and nodded.

"Well, suppose you explain this mystery."

But here Adoniram interposed.

"Let us take him to the cabin, and give him something dry to put on. He'll catch his death of cold here."

"'Nough said. Come on," said Caleb leading the way.

Fifteen minutes later the youth who rejoiced in the name of Swivel was inside of warm and dry garments, several sizes too large for him, and was telling his story to a most appreciative audience.

I will not give it in detail, and in Swivel's bad grammar; a less rambling account will suffice.

When Brandon Tarr had made his rapid retreat from the office of Adoniram Pepper and Co. he had run across the street, dodged around the first corner, and then walked hastily up town. He determined to keep away from the office for the remainder of the day, hoping to tire out both Uncle Arad and the deputy sheriff.

Finally he took a car and rode over to Brooklyn, and it was there that he fell in with Swivel, who was a veritable street gamin — a "wharf-rat" even — though a good hearted and not an altogether bad principled one.

It being a time in the day when there were no papers to sell, Swivel (wherever the boy got the name he didn't know, and it would have been hard to trace its origin) was blacking boots, and while he shined Brandon's the two boys scraped up an acquaintance.

Fearing that Uncle Arad or the officer, or perhaps both, would be on the watch about the shipping merchant's office, or the steamer dock, Brandon decided that Swivel would be a good one to have along with him to send ahead as "scout," and for a small sum the gamin agreed.

Brandon was a country boy, and was unfamiliar with city ways or city conveniences. It never crossed his mind to use the telephone communicating with his friends, and Swivel knew very little about telephones, any way.

So they waited until toward evening and then came back to New York.

Water Street and its vicinity, and the docks, were as familiar to Swivel as were the lanes and woods of Chopmist to Brandon. By devious ways the gamin led the captain's son to the ship owner's office, but it was quite dark by that time and the place was closed.

So they went to the pier at which the whaleback lay, and here Swivel showed that he was of great use to Brandon, for had it not been for him, his employer would have run straight into a trap. The deputy sheriff, Snaggs, was watching the steamer, and no less a person than Mr. Alfred Weeks himself, was talking with him.

By careful maneuvering the two boys got into a position from which they could hear some of the conversation of the two rascals; but the way to the steamer was right under Snaggs' eye, and Brandon dared not attempt it.

By intently listening, the captain's son heard several important items of news, and, greatly to his astonish-

ment, discovered that Uncle Arad, Leroyd, and Mr. Weeks himself were playing right into each other's hands, and that their object was to keep Brandon from getting back to his friends, and thus delay the sailing of the whaleback so that the craft on which the plotters expected to sail might get away first.

Snaggs was to keep a sharp lookout from the shoreward side of the whaleback and there was already a man in a boat patrolling the riverside that Brandon might not return from that direction, and a third person was "shadowing" Adoniram Pepper's residence. The ship owner's office would be watched during the day.

As soon as Brandon made his appearance he was to be seized at once on the strength of the Rhode Island warrant and sent back to Chopmist. This, the conspirators hoped, would keep Caleb Wetherbee from sailing for several weeks, and by that time Leroyd and the ex-clerk expected to overhaul the Silver Swan — that is, this is what Weeks and Leroyd themselves were planning to do; but the former took care to say nothing about the Silver Swan to the deputy sheriff.

Finding that there was no chance to get aboard the whaleback just then, and having heard Weeks say that he was going to meet Leroyd and that they two were to go that night and see the vessel and her commander, Brandon decided to follow them, and find out the name of the craft and where she lay, believing that the information would be of value to himself and to his friends.

Piloted by Swivel, Brandon followed "Sneaky A1" to the New England Hotel and while the ex-clerk went inside for Leroyd the two boys waited without,

and then took up the trail again when the two conspirators appeared.

The sailor and Weeks went over to Brooklyn and after two hours' dodging and running and hiding, they tracked the rascals to the brig *Success*, lying at a Brooklyn wharf.

Brandon decided that it would never do to be so near and not hear the plans the villains made with the captain of the *Success*, so he rashly crept aboard and listened to the conversation at the cabin skylight. And this was when he got into trouble.

He heard the two plotters agree with the captain of the vessel (who was not in the scheme at all) to pay two hundred dollars for six week's use of the brig, providing the *Success* put to sea at once.

She already had a very fair cargo for Savannah, and the agreement was that she should put in at that port for the time necessary for the cargo to be landed.

Thus, of course, the captain, who was the owner as well, was going to make a very good thing out of it, indeed. He asked no questions as to what use the brig was to be put to; and he agreed to allow Leroyd to accompany him to Savannah, where Weeks would meet them.

Brandon made a shrewd guess that the ex-clerk was to remain in New York until he was certain of *his* capture and incarceration; then he would reach Savannah by steamer.

It was quite evident that the two rascals had managed to "boil" more money out of old Arad Tarr than they had first expected, and could afford to be more lavish with their funds.

But, as I said, the boys, by venturing aboard the Success, got into trouble. Somebody came aft while they were listening to the conference below, and to escape discovery, they dodged down the after hatch.

The crew of the Success were already aboard, and the two men who constituted the "anchor watch" remained near the open hatchway (the other hatches were battened down), and the two boys were unable to leave the hold.

Morning came, and found them still there. The cargo was nearly all in, and the crew went to work to finish the lading by daylight. Brandon and Swivel retreated into the bows of the vessel, and managed to remain hidden all day.

They did not dare leave the hold, although they suffered extremely from lack of food and water, for Leroyd had come aboard to superintend the work, and would have seen them.

At evening the hatches were battened down, and the unintentional stowaways were left in darkness. But Swivel, who a shrewd and sharp eyed lad, had noticed a small door in the cabin bulkhead by which the cook doubtless entered the hold for provisions from time to time.

With their pocket knives they forced the fastenings of this door and Swivel made a raid into the pantry, which was left unguarded, and returned laden with provisions enough to last them a week if need be. He secured a big "beaker" of water, too.

Brandon also discovered the ship's provisions stored near the bows, and was sure that he could stand a siege.

Leroyd, they ascertained, hardly ever left the cabin or deck of the *Success*, and Brandon dared not venture out. At last, after talking the whole matter over, Swivel agreed to take the risk of giving himself up as a stowaway, and thus get put ashore before the brig started.

Then he was to make his way to the whaleback and explain Brandon's situation to Caleb.

The captain's son wrote his letter and placed it in the matchbox, which Swivel in turn had hidden in the breast of his shirt. Then the gamin pounded on the hatch until the crew heard him and let him out.

Naturally the captain of the *Success* was angry enough, for the brig was already to sail, and they were getting the lines cast off, so he summoned a night watchman from the dock, who took the unlucky Swivel in charge and handed him over to a policeman.

This was a phase of the situation which neither of the boys had considered. But there was no way out of it, and the gamin spent the day in the police station, for it was Sunday.

He was brought before the magistrate the next morning, but of course there was nobody to appear against him, so he was discharged with a reprimand. The police captain, however, kept him busy about the station until late in the afternoon, before he would let him go.

"He kep' me jugglin' wid er mop er wipin' up de floor," as the gamin expressed it to his hearers.

As soon as he was free he had hurried to the New York side; but upon reaching the vicinity of the whale-

back he discovered that the "patrol line" was drawn even closer than before.

Snaggs and two of his friends were on duty, for as the time approached for the sailing, they decided that if Brandon came back he would do so very soon.

Swivel had seen the raid the policemen made under the deputy's instigation, and after the bluecoats were safely out of the way, he had slipped into the water and made for the steamer.

"An' here I is," he said, in conclusion. "Dey didn't ketch me, nor dat Brandon Tarr, nuther. We's too fly for 'em."

"Of all the scrapes I ever heard of, this is the worst," Adoniram exclaimed in comment.

But Caleb, now that his fears for Don's safety were somewhat allayed, seemed rather to enjoy the situation.

"Oh, that boy's smart," he declared, with a chuckle. "I'll risk him even if he is in that vessel's hold. Leroyd won't get the best of *him*. Probably, too, the captain of the Success is not a bad sort of a fellow, an' he won't see the boy maltreated.

"I feel better, 'Doniram, and with your permission we'll get under way at once."

"But what shall we do with this lad?" asked the little merchant, nodding and smiling at Swivel. "He's deserving of much praise for his honesty and faithfulness."

"Oh, take me along, will yer?" exclaimed the gamin, with eagerness. "I'll work *hard* ef ye will! I jest wanter see dis thing out, I do! I like dat Brandon Tarr, an' I wanter see him git the di'monts

wot he said was on dat wreck yer arter. Say, lemme go, will yer?"

Caleb looked at the ship owner in perplexity.

"Oh, take him, Caleb," said Adoniram quickly. "It may be the making of the lad to get him off the city streets. He deserves it."

"So be it then," said Caleb, rising. "Now, Mr. Coffin and Mr. Bolin — to work! You'll have to go ashore at once, Adoniram. I shall have Number Three out of her berth in half an hour."

Steam was got up, the crew flew about their several duties under the energetic commands of the officers, and within a short time the whaleback, to the manifest disappointment of Mr. Snaggs, who watched proceedings from the shadow of the wharf, cast off her lines and steamed down the bay into the darkness of the night.

Thus did she begin the voyage whose object was the finding of the wreck of the *Silver Swan*.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STOWAWAY ABOARD THE SUCCESS

As we know, Brandon Tarr had no intention of remaining long away from his friends when he slipped out of Adoniram Pepper's office to escape arrest on the fraudulent charge of robbery, concocted by Uncle Arad.

The events which followed, however, made it necessary for him to remain away, and, finally, to go to sea as a stowaway in the hold of the *Success*, the vessel chartered by the conspirators to make search for the *Silver Swan*.

After the friendly street gamin, Swivel, left him in the hold, in the early hours of Sunday morning, Brandon of course had no means of knowing what had become of him — whether he had accomplished his purpose of getting away from the brig before she sailed, or whether, because she was short handed, the captain of the *Success* had retained him.

After Swivel was let up on deck, and the hatch closed, however, Brandon heard nothing further, except the heavy tramping of the sailors, the creaking of the ropes, and the hoarse roars of command from the officers.

The work of getting the *Success* away from the dock went rapidly on.

Quite fortunately for the stowaway, the hold of the Success was little more than two thirds filled with Savannah goods. In the bows, beside a great many bags and boxes and barrels of provisions for the use of the crew, there were likewise spare sails, cordage, etc.

It would be a very easy matter indeed for him to hide among the stuff if any one came into the hold.

The scent of bilge water was not at all strong, for the Success was a comparatively new vessel and had evidently been recently pumped out.

Brandor judged her to be about the size of the Silver Swan, much the same sort of craft in fact, and, like his father's vessel, the Success was a "tramp."

It was night — or at least a gloomy twilight — at all times in the hold; but Brandon thought that it was surely daylight by the time the brig was under way.

She was taken down the river by a fussy little steam tug and then, meeting the swells of the Atlantic, and a brisk gale springing up, she shook out her sails and dropped the tug astern.

Brandon was fearful that he might be sick, for he had never really been to sea and the brig pitched not a little in the waves of the ocean.

To reduce the possibility of this misfortune to a minimum, he ate but sparingly the first day or two out, and by that time all "squeamish" feelings passed away.

It was dreadfully dull in the dark hold, however. Of food and water he had a sufficiency, although the latter was warm and brackish; but there was absolutely nothing for him to do to pass away the time.

There was not even the spice of danger about his situation, for nobody came into the hold.

He dared not explore much at first, for he was afraid that he might be heard from the cabin or forecastle.

During a slight blow which came up the fourth day, however, while the spars and cordage were creaking so that all other sounds were drowned, he felt perfectly safe in moving about. If he could not hear what went on outside, nobody outside would be likely to hear him.

On this day, however, he received several tumbles, for the ship occasionally pitched so suddenly that he was carried completely off his feet. Nothing worse happened to him, though, than the barking of his elbows and knees.

Gaining confidence in his ability to get around without being discovered, he changed his position more frequently after this. The weather remained fair for some time following this small blow, and Brandon hung about the cabin bulkhead, striving to hear more of Leroyd's plans, if possible.

It was plain that the captain of the brig knew nothing of the real plans of the conspirators. They had told him what they pleased, and he was to ask no questions.

It was not long, however, before the stowaway discovered something which was quite a surprise to him. There was a woman on board the brig; he heard the rustle of her garments, and occasionally the tones of a female voice.

At first he thought her to be the captain's wife, but

because of the youthfulness of her tones and some words which the captain addressed to her, he changed this opinion, and decided that she was his daughter.

Brandon was quite interested in her, for a girl on a sailing vessel was certainly a novelty. He was sure she must be a "jolly one," as he expressed it, to sail with her father on a merchantman. Not many girls would have the pluck to do that.

As the days passed by, and the Success fled on before the favoring gales, drawing nearer and nearer to Savannah, Brandon became correspondingly worried over the obstructions to a safe escape from the brig, which were presented to his mind.

Once the brig reached port and the hatches were opened, it would be "all day" with him. Nothing but a miracle would save him from falling into the hands of Jim Leroyd, and he didn't like to think of that.

He had good reason to believe that the rascally sailor would not hesitate to injure him in any way possible.

Naturally his mind reverted to the trap in the cabin bulkhead by which Swivel had gained access to the cook's galley, as a possible means of escape before the hatches were removed. If the brig reached Savannah late in the day, doubtless the hatches would remain battened down till the next morning. In that case the trap might be his salvation.

Several times during the voyage the steward, sometimes with a seaman with him, entered the hold by this door, for something among the stores. At such

times Brandon "laid low" and his presence was not discovered.

What little food he had purloined from the stores was not noticed either.

Therefore, as the brig drew nearer to her destination Brandon set about studying the topography of the cabin — its entrances and exits — and how he could best pass through it and reach the deck without attracting the attention of anybody on board.

All this scouting had to be done at night, of course, and many were his narrow escapes while engaged in this most perilous undertaking.

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained," was the motto of the Tarrs, father and son. In Captain Tarr's case, and in that of his brother Anson, it had been, as a usual thing, a good deal of *venture* and little *gain*.

The same motive, however, was predominant in Brandon's nature, and he took many risks in thus scouting about the brig's cabin that almost any other boy would not have taken.

One night he had cautiously set the narrow door leading into the steward's pantry ajar, and sat just under it in the darkness of the hold, trying to discover if all but the officers, excepting the one in command of the watch, had turned in.

There was a light in the outer cabin, but he could not see into the room from where he sat, and he dared not enter the pantry until he was sure that the cabin was unoccupied. Occasionally a sound of low conversation would reach his ears from the deck, but otherwise all was still.

"I believe I'll risk it," he declared, after remaining



"I'M A STOWAWAY, I'VE BEEN IN THE HOLD EVER SINCE WE LEFT
NEW YORK"

The Quest of the Silver Swan

in a listening attitude for nearly half an hour. "I need water badly — my throat is well nigh parched — and if I could learn whether the lamp was usually left turned up like that, whether the cabin was empty or *not*, I might know better how to act when I do try to escape."

Finally he crawled through the opening and crept softly to the cabin door. The apartment was empty — or it appeared to be — although there was a chair drawn up to the table, and some books lay there as though having been in recent use.

"Guess I'd better not stay," thought the stowaway nervously. "But I must have a drink."

He turned back into the cook's galley, and took a deep draught from a bucket he found there. Just as he was about to leave the place he was electrified by hearing a voice say,

"What are *you* doing here?"

Brandon wheeled about like a flash. There framed by the cabin doorway was a young girl — the girl whose voice he had heard more than once since his incarceration in the hold of the *Success* — the captain's daughter!

"Who are you? What do you want!" she repeated, eying him fearlessly, though with a puzzled expression of countenance. "I never remember having seen *you* before."

Brandon was suddenly conscious that his long captivity in the vessel's hold had not improved his personal appearance, and with his feeling of fright at being discovered, there was also considerable vexation at being seen in such a plight by a lady.

The girl was bright looking and intelligent, with a face which attracted the boy greatly; in fact, he was almost tempted to believe that he had seen her somewhere, so familiar did she appear.

Dressed in a simple blue flannel yachting suit, trimmed with white braid, which set off her plump figure to great advantage, she was a pleasing picture.

"Why don't you answer me?" she demanded in vexation, as Brandon continued silent.

"Sh! don't give me away," begged the boy, taking a step nearer. "I'm a stowaway, I've been in the hold ever since we left New York."

"Another stowaway!" she exclaimed, but in a lower tone. "Why father found one just before we left port."

"I know it," returned Brandon. "He was with me. What did they do with him?"

"Father gave him into the hands of the police," replied the girl gravely. "He's very hard on stowaways. Why did you get into the hold?"

"Because I *had* to; yes, I did — actually had to," declared Brandon, in a whisper. "I can't tell you the whole story now; but I will some time. I haven't done anything wrong — excepting taking a few provisions from the ship's stores. Those I will pay you for now," and he took his purse from the pocket of his stained and ragged coat.

"No, no!" cried the girl, drawing back, "I do not want your money."

"Then I shall leave it, as I first intended, on the cabin table when we get to Savannah."

"But the men will find you when we get in, even if I *don't* tell father."

"I hope not," Brandon replied, so earnestly that the captain's daughter looked at him curiously.

"Is there anybody aboard whom you fear?" she asked shrewdly.

"Yes, there is. It is that evil looking man — the one who has chartered the brig — Jim Leroyd."

"He!" she exclaimed, in surprise. Then after a little silence she added:

"He *is* an evil looking man; I've told father so more than once, but he says that a man is not always as bad as he looks. Father has seen so many people and so much of the world, that I seldom question his judgment; but I have been impressed from the first that there was something wrong about him — and about that Mr. Weeks, who is in partnership with him, and whom we expect to meet at Savannah.

"It is a strange thing — this searching for a derelict brig — any way. I tell father that there is something wrong back of it."

"There *is*," Brandon declared. "I don't dare tell you about it now. You won't let anybody know I'm here, will you?"

"No — o, I'll promise that. It wasn't right to stow yourself away aboard the brig, but you look honest — although you *are* awfully dirty and ragged," said this most plain spoken young lady.

"I know it; I look terribly," whispered Don, creeping through the door into the hold again. Then he turned about and asked, "What is your name, please?"

"Milly Frank."

"Thank you; and mine is Brandon Tarr. Some time I can explain all this to you, and you will see that I did the only thing I could in stowing myself away here."

"But how do you expect to get out?"

"I hope we'll get to port in the night. If we do, then I'll try to slip out through the cabin."

"Somebody will catch you."

"I hope not."

"We-ell, I *hope*, not, too," said Miss Milly frankly. "I don't suppose it is just right, but I'll try to help you. If I see a chance for you to get away I'll come to this door and knock — see, like this."

She knocked twice in succession, but lightly, so that nobody might hear her but the stowaway.

"Thank you — thank you!" murmured the boy, and then he shut the trap quickly, for a heavy step sounded from the cabin without.

Somebody had come down from the deck — probably the officer of the watch.

CHAPTER XXX

SHOWING WHAT MISS MILLY DOES FOR BRANDON

BRANDON crept away from the trap in the bulkhead, fearing that at any moment the person who had entered the outer cabin during his conversation with the captain's daughter, might strive to capture him. He was afraid that the person had heard his movements in descending into the cargo hold again; but if the newcomer *did* hear anything, Milly evidently convinced him that there was nothing unusual going on, for Brandon was not disturbed.

Then ensued for the stowaway a period of anxious waiting. The very fact that some hope of successful escape had been held out to him, made the waiting all the harder to bear.

Each hour was bringing the *Success* nearer to Savannah, and Brandon remained near the bulkhead all the time, so as to miss no communication from his fair assistant.

Miss Milly seemed to really enjoy her secret knowledge of the stowaway's presence, and before the *Success* reached port she several times called him to the bulkhead, ostensibly for the purpose of finding out if he was all right, and was not going hungry. She supplied him with water, too, these last two or three

days, and he no longer had to leave the hold on midnight foraging expeditions.

“We shall be in this evening — perhaps before dark — so father told me last night,” she whispered to him one morning, and Brandon’s heart leaped for joy at the information.

Slowly, indeed, did that day pass.

The *Success* was beating up toward Savannah against a light head wind, which gave promise of becoming an off shore gale before it was through with. Fortunately, the brig escaped it, taking a tug about the middle of the afternoon, and pulling into her dock about dark.

“Thank Heaven!” was Brandon’s mental ejaculation, when this information was whispered through the crack in the bulkhead door to him, and he was indeed devoutly grateful.

His life in the hold from the time of departure from New York, had been a continual fever of impatience and doubt, and now that the real danger of attempting to escape was at hand, he was rejoiced. In a short time he would know whether he was to be free, or in Jim Leroyd’s power.

Milly had informed him that Captain Frank was exceedingly hard on all stowaways (as sea captains usually are, in fact), and he had no doubt but that he would be placed in a very uncomfortable, if not dangerous, position if the doughty captain should discover him.

Leroyd, of course, would step forward at once and declare that he (Brandon) was wanted in New York for robbery, and that fact could be proved by tele-

graphing, should the Savannah officers desire to do so. Then, if the whaleback steamer was not in, he should be absolutely friendless, and at the mercy of the vindictive sailor.

He lay close up against the door of the bulkhead all through the early evening. Some of the crew, he judged by what he heard, were allowed to go ashore for a few hours, and a part of the officers went with them — which officers, however, he could not tell.

There was both a first and second mate on the Success.

Brandon had no means of telling the time, but it must have been well along towards ten o'clock — perhaps later — when he heard the two gentle raps for which he had been so anxiously listening.

"Are you there, Brandon?" whispered the captain's daughter, and as Don pulled the door slightly ajar, she seized his hand, and aided him through the opening.

"Is the coast clear?" he asked anxiously.

"Sh! Yes, father and Mr. Marsh have gone up town with some of the men, and Mr. Barry has finally gone to bed." (Mr. Barry was the second officer.) "I was afraid that he'd never stop talking to me. I had to fairly *freeze* him out," and the merry girl laughed softly.

"But Leroyd?" pursued Brandon.

"He's gone, too."

"To bed?"

"No; up the street. I hope you can get off the brig before any of them get back. Now hurry."

"You're a good girl, Miss Milly. I hope I shall be able to repay you some time."

"Hush! go along now," she said, smiling, but pushing him toward the companionway. "What's that for?" for Brandon had thrust a little wad of bank notes into her hand.

"It is to pay for the stores I broke into below. Take it, and put it where your father will see it. Good by."

He started up the ladder, but came back again to ask,

"Is there a steamer in the bay? Did you get in time enough to see?"

"Lots of them."

"No, I should have said a whaleback steamer?"

"What are those — oh, I know what you mean. A great long, steel boat, with cabins way up above the hull, and no deck to speak of."

"That's it," said Brandon eagerly.

"Yes, there *is* one here. I saw it and meant to ask father what it was. I thought it was a dredger of some kind," and Milly laughed again gleefully. "Is that a steamer?"

"Yes. My friends are aboard her."

"Then you will find them," she returned delightedly. "That funny boat lies not far from our dock. Now go, or somebody will catch you."

Brandon crept noiselessly up the steps at this command, and peered out across the deck. A sailor sat on the rail some rods away, but his back was towards him; nobody else was in sight.

"Now's my chance," muttered Don, and springing

quickly up the remaining steps, he darted as noiselessly as a shadow across the deck, and leaped upon the pier. An instant later he was on the street, and slinking along in the shadow of the buildings, hurried away from the vicinity.

He did not know in which direction the "funny boat" Milly had seen, lay, but went blindly along, his only care for the moment being to escape from the neighborhood of the Success and from his enemy, Jim Leroyd.

The street he followed kept close to the wharves — skirted the waterfront in fact — and he passed many sailors; but he kept in the shadow as much as possible and nobody remarked about his apparel or the grime on his face and hands.

Suddenly, as he approached a great pier, where several large vessels were lying, he caught sight of a familiar figure coming down the street toward him. There was no mistaking that rolling, peculiar gait, nor the sound of the sharp "tap, tap" of the steel shod leg on the wooden pavement.

It was Caleb Wetherbee!

"Oh, Cale!" Brandon almost shouted, and running forward fairly threw himself into the sailor's arms.

"By the jumping Jehosophat!" cried the startled Caleb, and then, recognizing the boy, despite his rags and dirt, he uttered a loud "hurrah!" which left no doubt in Brandon's mind as to the sailor's satisfaction at seeing him once more.

But in a moment, he pushed the boy away from him and holding him by both shoulders, peered down upon him curiously.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "Where in the name o' Davy Jones have you been? Ye look as though you'd been stowed away in the hold o' a coal barge for a month."

"Well, I *have* been stowed away in a brig's hold — she got in only this evening. I've just got away from her. Did you get my note by Swivel?"

"I did, my lad."

"And Swivel himself?"

"He's aboard the steamer."

"I'm glad of that," declared Brandon. "I hoped you'd be kind to him. He did me a lot of favors, and I shan't be able to repay him for some time to come. Now, have you heard anything further from the Silver Swan?"

"I have, my lad, this very afternoon. She was sighted two weeks ago by a steamship from Rio to New York. Adoniram telegraphed me. But there's something else that ain't so pleasin'."

"What's that, Caleb?"

"The Kearsarge has been ordered to destroy several of these derelicts, the Silver Swan included, on her way down the coast to Havana. She sails tomorrow, I hear."

"Then we haven't any time to lose," Brandon exclaimed. "Let's go aboard at once, Cale. The first thing I want is a wash — I'm as dirty as a pig — and then I'll tell you the whole story."

"We'll do so right now," declared the big captain. "Come on. My boat's down here. Number Three lays off some way."

He hurried Brandon down to the dock, and they

were quickly seated in the steamer's small boat, and the men pulled out to the long, low, odd looking craft, which, since her arrival in the bay three days before, had attracted an enormous amount of attention.

"She sails like a swan, Don," declared Caleb, who, from openly scoffing at the whaleback, had begun fairly to worship her. "I never see anything beat it. She can outsail any cruiser in the navy, I believe, an' if we don't reach the Silver Swan in her first, it's because somethin' busts!" with which forcible declaration he helped the boy over the low rail to the iron deck of the steamer.

CHAPTER XXXI

WHEREIN NUMBER THREE APPROACHES THE SUPPOSED VICINITY OF THE SILVER SWAN

"WE'LL be off at once," Caleb Wetherbee declared, as soon as he had stepped upon the deck of the whale-back. "Go up to the cabin, Don, and tell the steward to fix you out with a bath and some clean clothes. You know which stateroom yours is."

Gladly did Brandon avail himself of this opportunity, and while Caleb was personally seeing to the matter of getting under way, he indulged in the luxury of a bath and a full change of clothing.

Before he was presentable again, Number Three had steam up (the fires had only been banked), and was moving slowly away from Savannah.

"Quick connections on this trip, eh, lad?" Caleb said, rubbing his hands gleefully, as he entered the cabin and found Brandon "clothed and in his right mind" again, as the youth himself expressed it. "Three hours ago you were in the hold of the brig, wasn't you? Now, let's hear your yarn."

Brandon complied with his request, giving fullest details of his incarceration in the hold of the *Success*.

"That 'ere is a mighty plucky girl," was Caleb's admiring comment when the tale was finished. "What d'ye say her name was?"

"Milly Frank; the cap'n is her father, and he owns the brig himself."

"Frank — Frank," repeated Caleb slowly. "That has a familiar sound."

"It has to me, too," said Brandon slowly. "I've been trying to think, ever since I met the girl, where I had heard her name and seen her face, too, for both seem familiar."

"I have it!" suddenly exclaimed Caleb, smiting his thigh.

"Well?"

"Frank was the name of the chap as Adoniram's sister married — the little one, ye know."

"You're right. And her name was Milly, too," Brandon rejoined eagerly. "Bet you this was a daughter of hers. I thought her face looked familiar, and now I think of it, it was because she looked so much like the face of Milly Pepper — her picture hung in the room they gave me at Mr. Pepper's."

"Twould tickle 'Doniram 'most to death to know he had a niece," Caleb said.

"And Miss Frances, too. As soon as we find the Silver Swan we must look up the Success. . . . And that reminds me, Caleb. You say you've heard of the wreck again?"

The captain of the whaleback drew a telegram from his pocket and passed it over to his young second officer.

"That's from 'Doniram. As I said, I got it this afternoon."

This was the message:

Rio steamship Creole Prince arrived this a. m., reports Silver Swan as being sighted March 23rd, latitude 27:18,, longitude 68:30.

"Still moving northeast, isn't she?" Brandon said, handing back the yellow slip.

"In course."

"And what was that you told me about the Kearsarge?"

"Here's the evening paper," responded Caleb, handing over a folded sheet. "There's the item," and he pointed with his stumpy forefinger to a marked passage which read as follows:

The Department has ordered the Kearsarge to leave the Chesapeake to-morrow on her trip to the West Indies. Her commander has received special orders to destroy several of the most dangerous derelicts which are at present infesting the coast below Hatteras, and especially off the Bermudas. The hull of the Hattie Marvin, floating bottom upwards north of Bermuda, and that of the Silver Swan, south of the same islands, both of which have been frequently reported of late and are exceedingly dangerous, will have the early attention of the midshipmen, who consider the excitement of blowing up derelicts a boon indeed.

"We have a good start of her," Brandon declared with satisfaction. "It will be because we're not smart if we can't find the Silver Swan first."

"Right, lad. An' we *will* find her, too," said Caleb hopefully.

"And about Swivel," went on Don, changing the subject; "where is he?"

"He's below with the men. Smart lad, he is, an' I reckon we'll make quite a man of him yet."

"I must do something for him — if I get those diamonds," Brandon added. "Now, Captain Wetherbee, with your permission I'll turn in and get some sleep, for I haven't slept decently for a week, I was so worried.

At sunrise the whaleback had left the mouth of the Savannah river, and the shores were low down on the horizon behind them. At sunset, when Brandon finally arose from a long slumber, the steamer was alone on a vast extent of heaving, restless sea. The land had entirely disappeared.

Brandon took up his duties of second officer with enthusiasm. He had everything to learn — or about everything — but the work was right along the line of his strongest taste. He loved it, and therefore went about it earnestly, and learned rapidly.

Messrs. Coffin and Bolin assisted him in every way possible, for they were greatly attracted to the boy. Of course, Caleb was ever his faithful mentor and teacher, and Brandon soon fell into the ways and duties of the ship, and accredited himself very well, indeed.

The swift steamer kept on her southeasterly course for several days without incident of importance. No derelicts were sighted, and but few vessels.

Brandon was told, however, that coming down from New York the whaleback had sighted two wrecks, but the captain dared not delay to investigate them until the principal object of the voyage was accomplished. Caleb determined to let all other derelicts but the Silver Swan severely alone.

The whaleback passed the Bermudas low down on

the sea line, and being well supplied with fuel kept on toward that portion of the ocean where the hull of the Silver Swan was supposed to be making her objectless voyage.

A sharp lookout was kept day and night, but it was not until after the Bermudas had faded from sight that anything other than passing sailing vessels and steamers were sighted. At night the whaleback ran very slowly, indeed, so that naught might escape her, but during the day she traveled at a high rate of speed.

Just before sunrise one morning Brandon was aroused by a commotion on deck. He leaped from his berth at once, and having been to sea long enough now to know how to dress quickly, was outside in less than a minute. Then he made out what the lookout on the top of the forward turret was shouting:

“Wreck — dead ahead, sir!”

CHAPTER XXXII

RELATING HOW THE SILVER SWAN WAS HEARD FROM

As the sun rose and lit up the sea more fully Brandon could plainly view the wreck which the steamer was now rapidly approaching.

It was not, he believed at first glance, the Silver Swan. It was the hull of a vessel, sunk a good deal at the stern; but one mast was standing, and a great tangle of cordage and torn sails was still attached to it.

"That's never the Silver Swan, lad," Caleb declared. "She was swept as clean as a whistle. This was a square rigged vessel, however."

The steamer ran in very close to the wreck, and Brandon made out the words, "Porpoise, New Haven," under the bows.

The derelict gave every appearance of being what Mr. Coffin called "an old stager," and labored in the seas most heavily.

"That's a mighty dangerous wreck," Caleb declared reflectively, as the whaleback steamed slowly by. "It wouldn't take long to sink her, although 'twould cost something. What d'ye say, Mr. Coffin — will you go aboard her, and if she isn't worth towing in, drop enough dynamite into her hold to blow her up? — You

know how to run that battery Mr. Pepper had put aboard."

"Aye, aye, sir," the first officer replied, and hustled away to order a boat launched at once.

By special request Brandon was allowed to accompany the expedition. The old hulk was found to be in ballast, and Mr. Coffin therefore placed a quantity of the powerful explosive in her hold, attached the wire, and they pulled back toward the steamer.

When the small boat was out of danger the officer touched the button and an instant later the still morning air was shattered by a terrific roar.

The wreck seemed almost to rise from the sea, a great volume of fire and smoke issued from her amidships, and she broke in two, the water rushing in and filling the interior with a sound like the echo of the explosion.

Slowly the derelict settled, her stern going first, until the very tip of the tottering mast disappeared below the surface. Only a few splintered deck timbers, which would soon follow the ship to the bottom, remained to show where the hulk had disappeared.

"Good job, that," Caleb declared, when the boat had returned to the steamer, "though it cost us three hours' time. That hulk had been floating for nearly a year, according to the pilot charts."

The second day after the blowing up of the derelict Porpoise, a steamship was sighted by the whaleback. It was the City of Havana, of the James E. Ward line, and, by running in close, Caleb was able to hold converse with the ship's captain.

To the satisfaction of the captain of Number Three,

the City of Havana's commander could, and did, give him some information about the derelict brig of which they were in search.

The steamship had sighted the Silver Swan in latitude 28, longitude 69:13, and reported the vessel in a remarkable state of preservation. The spring storms had not appeared to damage her much.

This news was hailed joyfully by Caleb and Brandon, and the course of the whaleback was changed a little more to the east.

The weather, however, which had been all that they could wish thus far since leaving Savannah, began to get nasty. The sea became short and choppy, though without apparently affecting the sailing of the whaleback, and the sky looked bad.

Finally, after a day or two of this, a dead calm occurred, and Caleb shook his head sagely.

"We're goin' to ketch it," he declared, "an' we'll have a chance to find out how the steamer rides in a gale, whether we want to or not."

And he was right. While the whaleback steamed slowly ahead, a heavy swell came on, although there was not a breath of air stirring. The sea heaved and rolled, seemingly in throes of agony.

At first the cause was entirely submarine. At length, however, there was a groaning, moaning sound, which gradually increased in volume, until, with a sudden roar, the hurricane swooped down upon them. The waves were tossed toward the wind driven, leaden clouds with awful fury, breaking like surf over the whaleback; but the steamer withstood the fearful

shocks as easily as she had the choppy waves which preceded the gale.

She kept but little headway, however, and as the black night shut down about the craft, Brandon realized fully the terrible risks and hazardous chances taken by "those who go down to the sea in ships."

For two days the gale continued, but with less fury than signaled its first appearance. Number Three might have put back into Bermuda, but she acted so well that Caleb decided to stay outside and thus lose no possible opportunity of sighting the Silver Swan.

Brandon had never contemplated what a storm at sea meant before and he was thankful indeed that he was not upon a sailing vessel.

During the first of the gale they had sighted several vessels, with close reefed sails, scudding before the wind, but all were riding the sea well.

Late in the afternoon of the second day, however, the lookout, who was lashed to the top of the wheelhouse, reported a wreck ahead.

At first Caleb and Brandon, who were both armed with glasses, could not make it out clearly enough to decide what it was.

Finally the old seaman declared with conviction.

"It's the hull of a vessel an' her masts have been carried away sure."

"Do you think it is the brig, Caleb?" the young second mate asked eagerly.

"Ye got me there. It *may* be, and then ag'in it may not. We'll run down an' see."

The storm was by no means abating and Caleb dared not run very close to the wreck.

As they approached it, however, the former mate of the Silver Swan became convinced that it was not the wreck they sought. He was familiar with every line of Captain Horace Tarr's vessel and this, he declared, was not it.

Suddenly Swivel's sharp eyes caught sight of something which the others had not seen.

"There's something tied to that stump of a mast, sir," he exclaimed, pointing toward the forward part of the wreck. "It's a flag o' some kind."

"It's a signal!" Mr. Coffin declared. "There's some poor soul on the wreck. See — there he is."

At the instant he spoke they all descried a moving figure on the derelict — some one, who, clinging with one hand to the cordage which still hung to the mast, with the other waved a signal frantically at the approaching steamer.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Coffin, strongly moved by the scene. "What shall we do? No mortal man can help him in this gale."

"We must do something," Caleb replied.

"A boat couldn't live in this sea, sir," said the first officer despairingly.

"We must try to throw him a line."

But upon trial it was found that it would be exceedingly hazardous to run down near enough to the wreck for that. The hull was rolling so frightfully that it might turn completely over at any moment and carry the steamer to the bottom with it should they run in too near.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN WHICH COMRADES IN COURAGE LAUNCH THEM- SELVES UPON THE DEEP

BRANDON's glass had been turned upon the figure on the wreck for the few moments during which the others had been discussing the possibility of saving the poor creature. Now he exclaimed hurriedly.

"That's not a man—it's a woman! Don't you see her skirts blowing in the gale? She is alone on the wreck."

Caleb seized his own glass again, and Mr. Bolin dived into the cabin for his.

"You're right, lad," the captain declared. "Either all the men have been swept overboard, or the white livered rascals have taken to the boats and abandoned her."

But Brandon was making other discoveries. As the steamer cut through the huge waves, approaching nearer and nearer to the wreck, something about the outlines of the female figure seemed familiar to him.

He knew the face which was turned pleadingly toward the steamer—the powerful glass revealed every feature clearly.

It was Milly Frank!

At the instant of Brandon's discovery, the steamer gave a sudden roll, and he was thrown partially from

his balance and his glass wavered an instant from the girl's face.

In that instant the stern of the fated vessel came within range of his vision and he plainly saw the word "Success" painted in tarnished gold lettering upon it.

"Caleb! Caleb!" he cried, forgetting for the moment to apply the proper term of respect to the captain which, according to the quarter deck etiquette, he should have done, "that's the Success, and the *girl* is the captain's daughter!"

"Oh, it can't be, lad!" cried the old man, unwilling to believe such a fact possible.

"It is the Success — I see her name," Mr. Bolin declared.

"Poor little girl! poor little girl!" exclaimed the honest old sailor brokenly. "We can't stand here and see her perish."

"I shan't," Brandon affirmed, passing his own glass to Mr. Coffin.

"What can you do, lad?" queried Caleb. "The gale's not abating a mite."

"All that we can do I see, sir, is to stand by till the sea goes down, and then, God willing, take her off," said Mr. Coffin.

"Why, that old hulk may sink at any moment!" cried Brandon. "I won't stay idle and see that girl drown after all she has done for me."

"An' it's Adoniram's niece — no doubt of it," murmured Caleb.

"That is another reason why we should try to save her. I haven't forgotten all that Mr. Pepper has done for me," declared Brandon decidedly.

"But, lad, lad, what can we do?" gasped the captain. "It's not a living possibility to send a boat to that brig, and I dare not risk the lives of all these men in my care by running in near enough for a cable to be thrown."

"And the girl probably couldn't fasten it, if we did," added Mr. Bolin.

"Then we must do something else. Run by her, Caleb, and I'll carry a rope to the brig."

"You're crazy!" cried Mr. Coffin.

"Maybe I am," Brandon returned, his face white and set; "but I shall do it."

Swivel, who was clinging to a guard rope within hearing, struck in with him,

"Lemme do it, Brandon — I mean Mr. Tarr. I kin swim like a fish."

"Nobody shall go but myself," the boy declared, with emphasis. "I won't suggest a perilous undertaking and not be the one to carry it out."

"Cap'n Tarr right over again," Caleb muttered.

Then he turned suddenly upon his young second officer.

"Kick off your shoes, lad, and try it. If it's the Lord's will that you accomplish it, well and good; if you can't, we'll haul you back. Quick, now! I'll order Mike to go ahead full speed."

Before the words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth, Brandon had kicked off his light shoes.

Swivel, who could not be taught strict quarter deck manners, followed the young officer's example.

"What are you about, you young limb o' Satan?" demanded Mr. Coffin, catching him at this.

"Ef he goes, I'm goin' an' you ain't goin' ter stop me, Mr. Coffin," announced the gamin. "I'm in dis!"

"Behave yourself," Brandon commanded, quickly knotting a light, strong cable about his waist, while Mr. Bolin fastened a life preserver beneath his arms. "One is enough."

"Den I'm de one!" the boy declared vehemently, and dodging Mr. Coffin's outstretched arm, he seized a second coil of rope, one end of which was fastened to a ring in the deck, and ran to the stern of the steamer.

"Come back here!" roared the first mate angrily. "I'll rope's end you, you little scamp!"

"You'll have ter do it when I get back from dat wreck!" returned the boy, with an impish grin, and the steamer having now forged ahead of the laboring brig, and Brandon being all ready, the fearless Swivel also dropped over the rail, and clinging with one hand a moment, let go simultaneously with his friend and patron.

Brandon tried to send him back, but it was too late then. The first wave seized them in its embrace and they were carried far out from the steamer's stern.

The cork belt kept the young second mate above the waves, but even with this assistance, he found himself much less able to cope with the heavy seas than was his companion.

Swivel dived through the rollers like a gull, keeping faithfully by his friend's side; and had it not been for the street gamin, Brandon afterward declared that he should never have reached the wreck alive.

He had no idea how furious the waves were until

he was among them, battling for his life, and trying to reach the distant brig.

It was a terrific struggle, lasting perhaps not five minutes, but a few more seconds would have completely exhausted him.

A great wave suddenly swept them directly under the brig's bows. Swivel seized Brandon's hand with one of his own and with the other grabbed a rope trailing over the rail of the wreck.

Fortunately the other end of the rope was securely fastened, and with an almost superhuman effort Swivel raised Brandon until the second mate of the whale-back could grasp the rail.

In another moment Brandon was aboard the brig, and had pulled Swivel over the rail after him.

"Wot — did — I — tell — ye?" gasped the gamin, whose spirit no amount of danger could quench. "Two heads *is* better'n one, ef one *is* a cabbage head. Where's de girl?"

But Milly was already creeping forward to their position on her hands and knees.

"How can you take me back?" she asked at once, her voice sounding as firmly above the gale as though danger was the farthest of anything from her thoughts.

Then she recognized Brandon.

"You?" she exclaimed, in surprise. "I never thought of you being on that steamer."

"I didn't forget what you did for me," Brandon said in reply. "I'd have risked a good deal more than this for you."

"You couldn't risk any more," she declared firmly; "for you've risked your life."

Meanwhile Swivel was signaling to those on the

steamer to attach a heavier cable to the one tied about his waist. This was done in a short time, and then all three of the endangered ones laid hold and pulled the cable in, hand over hand.

It was hard work. The heavy rope was wet and unmanageable, and the strain on their young muscles was terrible.

Milly worked as unceasingly as did the two boys, but the cable came across the tossing waves but slowly.

"Where are the crew — where is your father?" asked Brandon.

The girl's face worked pitifully at this question.

"Father is dead," she sobbed, "and the crew took to the boats while I was below. That was early this morning."

"And you've been here alone ever since!" said Brandon pityingly.

At that instant there was a slight exclamation from Swivel, and the small cable by which they were endeavoring to gain the larger one, came in over the rail with fearful suddenness.

All three were sent sprawling on the deck.

"What is it?" gasped Milly.

"The rope's parted," cried Brandon in horror.

"Never mind; don't you give up, missy," Swivel exclaimed. "We've got another rope yet. Where's de end o' dat rope you had tied 'round you, Brandon?" he demanded.

Brandon only groaned.

"Where is it?" shrieked the other lad, fairly shaking him in his impatience.

"I cast it loose," was the disheartening reply. "It is gone!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE INCIDENTS OF A NIGHT OF PERIL

NIGHT was shutting down over the face of the storm tossed ocean — night of the blackest and wild-est description. Already the outlines of the steamer ahead were scarcely visible from the bows of the water logged brig.

By a series of misfortunes (Brandon Tarr bitterly accused himself of causing the crowning mischance of them all) the three unfortunates on the Success were entirely cut off from escape.

“Oh,” cried Milly, in bitterness of spirit second only to Brandon’s own, “you have lost your lives for me — both of you. I am not worthy of it!”

“Don’t ye lose heart, missy,” Swivel declared, with a courage he was far from feeling. “Th’ ship hain’t sunk.”

“No one but God Himself knows how long it will keep afloat, though,” Brandon returned despairingly.

“And the gale is increasing again, too,” added Milly softly.

“This is the last end of it, that’s wot I think,” declared Swivel cheerfully. “It’ll blow itself out now purty soon.”

Brandon could not look at the situation thus hope-

fully, but he determined to say nothing further to make the girl despair.

Swivel's tone shamed him into thinking of her rather than of himself.

The men on board the steamer, had ere this discovered what had happened, but they could do nothing to assist the three on the brig.

It was absolutely necessary to keep some headway — considerable, in fact — on the whaleback, to prevent her from swinging around into the trough of the waves. Every moment they were getting farther and farther away from the doomed derelict.

Caleb roared something to them through the trumpet, but the distance and the howling of the gale prevented them from making out what he said. The wind and spray beat upon them alternately as they crouched together in the high bows, and every other sound but that of the elements was drowned.

"Come back in the shelter of the mast," Brandon shouted at last. "We can do nothing further here. Our position is so exposed that we may be washed off before we know it."

Each of the boys grasped an arm of the captain's daughter and with no little trouble they managed to reach the great tangle of rigging and shreds of canvas which hung about the one remaining mast.

The topmast had long since been carried away, but the main spar still defied the storm, writhing and twisting like a thing of life in the fierce grasp of the gale.

Here, crouching under its lee, the shipwrecked boys and girl clung to the stiffened ropes with hands little less stiffened by the cold and water.

As an extra precaution they bound themselves together, and then fastened the same rope to the mast, knowing that a wave might board the lumbering brig at any moment and sweep everything on it that was not fastened, into the sea.

Occasionally, as the wreck climbed heavily to the summit of an enormous roller, they could catch a glimpse of the steamer's lights; but as the hours dragged slowly on, these became less and less distinct.

Without doubt the whaleback was drawing slowly away from the wreck, and the worst of it was, those on the steamer probably did not suspect it.

The castaways had no means of showing their whereabouts by lights, and the steamer was too far away, and had been since the darkness shut down, for those aboard her to see the outlines of the brig. Therefore Caleb Wetherbee and his officers had no means of knowing that the steamer was traveling nearly two miles to the brig's one.

Suddenly there was a flash of light from the steamer's deck, and a rocket went hurtling upwards into the leaden sky, to fall in showers of sparks into the sea. It was a message of hope to the unfortunates on the brig — it was meant as such, at least — but they had no way of replying to it.

"Aren't there any rockets aboard?" asked Brandon of the captain's daughter.

"There may be, but I do not know where," the girl replied; "and the cabin is half filled with water, too."

"Never mind if it is; I believe I'll try to find them. There must be something of the kind aboard."

"Ye'd better stay here," Swivel warned him anxiously. "I don't like ter see ye git out o' sight."

"Don't you think I can take care of myself?" Brandon demanded.

"Not alone," was the prompt reply. "I reckon 'at none of us can't take very good keer of ourselves in this gale. We'd best not git too fur apart."

"Well, I'm going to try to get into the cabin," Brandon added. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

He unfastened the rope from about his waist, and in spite of the objections of his two companions, crept aft toward the cabin companionway.

The feat was not of the easiest, as he quickly found; but once having determined to do it, he would not give up.

The door of the cabin was jammed fast, but after some little maneuvering he was able to force an entrance, and descended into the apartment, which was knee deep with water washed in from the heavy seas which had broken over the brig during the day.

There was no means of lighting a lantern, however, and after rummaging about in the darkness for half an hour, he had to return to the deck without having accomplished anything.

As he stepped outside again, he found the brig pitching worse than ever. The gale was full of "flaws" now—a sure sign that it was blowing itself out—but occasionally it would rise to greater fury than it had shown in all the two previous days.

Just as he reached the deck one of these sudden squalls occurred, and a huge green roller swept in

over the stern of the brig, and advanced with lightning speed along the deck, sweeping wreckage and all else before it.

Brandon had just closed the door, and by clinging to the handle, was able to keep himself from being washed overboard; but he was almost drowned during the few moments while the wave filled the companionway.

As it passed, there was a sudden crack forward, and even above the shriek of the gale, he heard Swivel's cry of alarm.

With a rush and roar like the fall of a mighty forest tree, the mast, splitting at the deck, toppled over across the rail.

Brandon uttered a despairing shout, for it seemed impossible for the wreck ever to right herself, the weight of the fallen spar dragged her over so far.

But providentially the mast had split clear off at the deck, and after staggering a moment from the blow, the brig shook off her incumbrance, and came to an even keel again.

But following the falling of the mast came a shriek from Milly Frank which pierced his very soul.

“Brandon! Brandon! Help!”

With that cry ringing in his ears, the boy dashed forward along the slippery deck and reached the spot where he had left his companions.

“Quick! this way!” called the girl's clear voice, and darting to the rail he was just able to grasp the captain's daughter and drag her back from the cruel sea.

“Now him!” commanded the girl, and pulling in

the line which was still attached to her waist, Brandon drew the form of Swivel out of the waves.

"Oh, he is dead!" cried Milly in agony. "He saved me, Brandon. When the mast fell he cut the rope and took me in his arms and ran, but one of the ropes tripped him up and we were washed to the rail by that great wave."

"I hope he isn't dead — oh, I hope not!" Brandon returned, kneeling down beside the motionless boy, and chafing his forehead tenderly.

Milly took one of the poor street gamin's hands in her own and chafed it likewise.

Probably never before during his miserable, eventful existence had Swivel known such gentleness. His life had been hard indeed, and it looked as though its lamp had gone out now in the performance of a noble and courageous deed.

There on the storm swept deck Milly and Brandon knelt for nearly an hour before the unconscious boy showed the least sign of life.

Then the eyelids fluttered a little and he drew in his breath with a slight sigh.

"He's coming to!" Brandon exclaimed.

But although poor Swivel opened his eyes once or twice, it was a long time before he seemed to realize where he was or what had happened.

At last he whispered brokenly.

"Don't — don't — fret yerself — missy — I'm — I'm goin' ter be all right."

"Are you in pain, Swivel?" queried Brandon, having almost to shout to make himself heard.

Milly was crying softly. The strain of the last

twenty hours was beginning to tell on even her bravery and fortitude.

“Dret—dretful!” gasped the injured boy weakly.

Brandon had to place his ear almost to his lips to distinguish his words.

“Right—here,” and he laid his hand feebly on his chest.

“That’s where he struck across the rail,” declared Milly, when Brandon had repeated these words to her. “Oh, the poor fellow has been hurt internally. *Do you think the morning will ever come, Brandon?*”

“I’m afraid it will come very soon for him, poor boy,” replied Don meaningly, and there were tears in his own eyes.

Swivel had closed his eyes and a strange, grayish pallor was spreading over his drawn features.

His hearing seemed wonderfully acute, however. He heard the word “morning” at least, and his eyes flew open again and he struggled to raise himself on his elbow.

“*Is it morning now?*” he asked feebly.

“No, no,” replied Brandon soothingly. “Not yet, Swivel. Don’t exert yourself. Lie down again.”

The injured youth strove to speak once more, but suddenly fell back upon the rude pillow Don had made of his coat, and a stream of blood flowed from his lips.

Milly uttered a startled gasp, but Brandon hastily wiped the poor fellow’s lips, and after a moment the hemorrhage ceased.

But they looked at each other meaningly. They had lost all hope now of the shock not proving fatal.

While they had watched Swivel, the gale, as though at last satisfied with its cruel work, had gradually lessened. The wind ceased almost wholly within the next hour, although the waves did not entirely go down.

Swivel lay motionless during all this time, occasionally opening his eyes to gaze up into the faces of his two friends, whom he could see quite clearly, but otherwise showing no sign of life.

Finally he attempted to speak again.

"It's — it's hard — on me — ain't it?" he gasped, in Brandon's ear. "I — I — don' wanter die."

His friend did not know what to say in reply to this, but Milly seized his hand and tried to comfort him.

"Don't be afraid, Swivel," she said, trying to make her own faith serve for the dying fellow too. "It will be better over there."

"Mebbee — mebbee they won't let me come."

"Yes, you may, if you ask, Swivel. Don't you love God?"

"I hain't — hain't never — heered — much erbout Him," returned the lad. "I heered the chap at the mission — school talk erbout — erbout Him some. I — I never paid much 'tention."

His voice was stronger now, but in a moment the blood gushed from his lips again.

"Don't talk — oh, don't talk, Swivel?" cried Brandon beseechingly.

"Twon't matter — not much," the boy returned, after a few minutes.

He felt blindly for Brandon's hand and seized it

tightly. Milly, still kneeling on the opposite side, held the other.

"Can't ye say a prayer, like — like that feller in the mission did — er one o' them hymns?" he muttered.

The boy and girl crouching above him looked into each other's faces a moment in silence.

Brandon Tarr might have faced a thousand dangers without shrinking, but he could not do this. It remained for Milly to comply with the poor boy's request.

After the terrific howling of the gale, the night seemed strangely still now. The hurrying, leaden clouds were fast breaking up, and here and there a ray of moonlight pierced their folds and lit up the froth flecked summits of the tossing billows.

One narrow band of light fell across her pale face as she raised it toward the frowning heavens and began to sing:

"Jesus, Saviour, pilot me,
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal;
Chart and compass come from the Thee:
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

"When at last I near the shore,
And the fearful breakers roar
Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
'Fear not, I will pilot thee'!"

Faintly at first, but mounting higher and clearer, rose the sweet girlish voice, and not only the poor

street gamin, but Brandon himself listened entranced.

When the beautiful hymn was finished, Brandon felt that it was a prayer not only for him whose spirit might at any moment depart, but for Milly and himself, who should remain behind at the mercy of the storm tossed sea.

CHAPTER XXXV

SHOWING HOW CALEB APPEARED ON THE SCENE JUST TOO LATE

THE anxiety of Caleb Wetherbee for Brandon's safety was really pitiful to behold. When the cable parted which attached the wrecked brig to the steamer, the captain at once realized that his ward and his two companions were in a very serious predicament.

There was absolutely nothing that those aboard the whaleback could do in that howling gale to assist in the rescue of the castaways.

Occasionally Caleb had a rocket fired to show the unfortunate trio that he was remaining near them; but, as we know, that was very sorry comfort to Brandon and his two companions. It simply served to convince them how rapidly Number Three was leaving them astern.

On one point Caleb's calculations were very much amiss. He was running the whaleback as slowly as practicable, keeping just enough headway on to keep her from broaching to; but he failed to realize that even at that speed he was sailing two miles or more to the brig's one.

Of course, when once the night had shut down it was impossible for anybody aboard the steamer to see the outlines of the wreck, and therefore this fact

escaped their attention. The water logged *Success* moved at a snail's pace, and all night long the steamer drew away from her, so that, after the storm had cleared away and the sun rose, not a sign of the brig appeared.

"Has she sunk?" queried Caleb in distress, as, in company with his two remaining officers, he swept the horizon with his glass.

"Rather, we have left her behind," declared Mr. Coffin, making a shrewd guess as to the real facts in the case. "The brig must have sailed slower than we supposed."

"Then we must turn about at once and run back," Caleb declared, and the necessary orders were given.

The day following the cessation of the gale was most beautiful, but Caleb cared nothing for that. He neither ate nor slept, but remained on deck nearly all the time, scanning the wide stretch of sea visible from the top of the after cabin.

The day passed and night came on, however, without a sign of the wreck appearing.

During this time the steamer had been running in a direction generally south; while the gale was on she had run northeast. The whole day being spent in fruitless search in this direction, however, Caleb commanded the steamer to be put about again at evening.

All that second night she ran slowly to the eastward, thus allowing for the supposed drift of the *Success*, but they saw no signs of the derelict, although the night was clear and the moon bright.

The day following they spoke several partially dis-

mantled vessels whose crews were beating into the Bermudas for repairs. None of these, however, had sighted the wreck of the *Success*.

"They've gone to the bottom," groaned poor Caleb that afternoon, as he sat on the edge of the berth in his stateroom.

He could not sleep, but had taken Mr. Coffin's advice and tried to.

"All gone — Brandon, whose dead father I promised I'd look out for him, an' that other poor lad, an' the little girl. God help me! how can I go back and tell Adoniram about this?

"An' then, we've not found the *Silver Swan* yet — nor air we likely to after this gale. She's gone to the bottom, too, mayhap, and Brandon's fortune along with her. Well —"

Just here he was interrupted in his soliloquy by the hurried entrance of Mr. Bolin.

"Will you please come on deck, sir?" said the third officer, evidently somewhat excited. "We have sighted what appears to be a steamer and a dismantled vessel with her. Mr. Coffin wishes you to come up and see if you can make her out."

But Caleb was out of the cabin before Mr. Bolin had finished speaking, glass in hand.

"Where is she?" he demanded.

"Right ahead, captain," replied Mr. Coffin. "There! you can see the black smoke rising from the steamship's funnels now. The wreck, if it is a wreck, is between her and us."

Caleb got the range of the two vessels almost im-

mediately, and it did not take a very long look to assure him that his mate was right.

"That's a wreck, sure enough," he declared, paying but very little attention to the steamship. "Order the engineer to go ahead at full speed."

Fifteen minutes later they were near enough to see the wreck quite plainly. The steam vessel seemed to be lying quietly upon the sea now, and as they looked a boat was lowered and pulled toward the dismantled hulk.

They were still several miles away, however, and could not see whether the wreck was boarded by those in the small boat or not.

"It strikes me," began Mr. Coffin after a prolonged gazing through his glass at the wreck, "that that doesn't have the same appearance as that vessel the boys are on. What do you think, Mr. Wetherbee?"

Caleb had doubts in that direction himself.

"I tell ye what it is," he said: "the Success had a mast for'ard. This one hain't."

"It's my opinion that's the hull of a brig, just the same," Mr. Coffin declared.

Suddenly Caleb uttered an exclamation.

"That's no steamship," he declared. "See her colors and open ports. Why, it's a man o' war!"

"Right you are," returned the mate.

"It's the Kearsarge," added Mr. Bolin. "She was to come down this way, you know. Going to the West Indies."

"One of her duties was to blow up derelicts — the Silver Swan among them. Suppose this hull is the Swan!" cried Mr. Coffin.

Caleb had fairly grown white in spite of his tan.

"Great Peter!" he ejaculated. "Look-er-there!"

The small boat had left the side of the wreck, and was now some distance away from her.

The whaleback was near enough to see that the officer commanding the cutter had ordered the men to cease rowing and was standing up in the bow of the boat.

"They're going to blow her up!" shouted Caleb. "Crowd on every ounce of steam she'll hold. We must stop it! Suppose that it is the Silver Swan!"

He fairly groaned aloud, and in his excitement allowed the costly glass to fall upon the deck, which treatment did not materially benefit it.

Mr. Bolin darted away to the engine room, and in another moment the funnels of the whaleback began to pour forth the blackest kind of smoke, and the water beneath her stern was churned to foam by the rapid beats of the propeller.

They were all of a mile away from the wreck yet, and every instant was precious. Caleb stumped up and down the deck, fairly wild with apprehension, his eyes fixed on the cruiser's cutter, in the bow of which the officer seemed to be adjusting something.

If the whaleback had been armed Caleb would have fired a shot to attract the attention of the cruiser's people, but there wasn't a weapon larger than Brandon's rifle on the steamer.

Mr. Coffin looked at his commander anxiously. He did not fully understand why the captain wished to reach the Silver Swan and save it, if *this* was the

Silver Swan; but he did not believe that they could accomplish it. And he was right.

The whaleback was still half a mile away from the scene of operations when suddenly the officer in the cutter sat down, and the instant following there was a loud explosion.

A column of smoke and flame shot into the air, and when the smoke cloud rose, only a few harmless splinters on the surface of the sea remained to show the former position of the wreck!

And then, when it was too late, the officer in the small boat discovered the approach of the whaleback.

Number Three was still driving ahead at full speed, and when her steam was shut off she had such headway that she nearly passed the cruiser's cutter.

Caleb, his voice trembling with apprehension, leaned over the rail and shouted his question to the officer who had just "touched off" the charge that had blown the derelict into atoms.

"What craft is that you blew up?" he asked.

"That was a derelict," responded the officer, who was an ensign, in surprise.

"What was her name, d' ye know?"

"She was sunken so low at the stern that we couldn't read her name."

"But can't you guess?" cried Caleb, in great exasperation.

"Oh, there's not much doubt in our minds as to who she was. She was one we were ordered to destroy. The name on her bow was badly battered, but we could make out part of it."

"Well, for heavens' sake, what was it?" burst forth

the wooden legged captain wildly. "Don't beat 'round the bush any longer."

The ensign began to grow as red as a peony. The old man's manner of questioning ruffled his dignity sorely.

"To the best of my belief it was the brig Silver Swan, of Boston, U. S. A.," he declared stiffly.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE CASTAWAYS ON THE BRIG SUCCESS

To Milly and Brandon on board the water logged brig, it seemed as though the long night would never end. They crouched together over the body of poor Swivel, until his clasp relaxed from their hands and he sank into a deep sleep.

Brandon did not believe that the injured boy would ever awake from that unconsciousness; nevertheless, he made his way below to the cabin again and brought up an armful of blankets to add to his comfort.

He wrapped one about Milly, and she made him share it with her, when Swivel was more comfortable.

Thus sitting close together on the cold, wet deck, they conversed in whispers till dawn; Milly, at Don's earnest solicitation, relating all that had occurred since the night he had escaped from the Success at Savannah.

It was rather a disconnected story, for the poor girl often broke into weeping at the memory of her father's violent death. She had sincerely loved him, although he was a stern, rather morose man.

It seemed that Leroyd had learned that the plans of himself and his friends to delay the departure of the whaleback from New York had failed, and that

the steamer had touched at Savannah and departed the very night the *Success* got in.

Finding that Sneaky Al had already arrived by steamship from New York, he promised Captain Frank an extra hundred dollars if he would land only a portion of his goods and set sail for the Bermudas again.

The brig's commander could not resist this temptation, and therefore the *Success* lay at Savannah but a day and two nights. Then, with Messrs. Weeks and Leroyd aboard, she had sailed directly for that part of the ocean in which the whaleback had run across her during the gale.

Brandon also elicited the information that the brig had not been successful in her search—had not seen a derelict, in fact, since leaving Savannah—and that Leroyd was in a fiendish temper before the gale came up.

When that began, he and his friend, Weeks, turned to with the brig's crew and did all they could to keep her afloat. Captain Frank, however, was crushed under a falling spar and instantly killed when the gale first started in, and the first officer was washed overboard.

When the brig became unmanageable and the crew rushed for the boats, nobody thought, or at least nobody stopped, for the bereaved girl in the cabin. She discovered that the crew had gone and left her only by coming on deck after the water had begun to fill the cabin.

Brandon and the captain's daughter had ample time,

before the sun appeared, to get very well acquainted with each other.

Don told her all about himself, about the object of the voyage of the whaleback, and of the plot concocted by his uncle Arad and Messrs. Leroyd and Weeks to find the Silver Swan and obtain the treasure aboard her themselves.

As soon as it *did* grow light, Brandon made his way below again and after a great deal of trouble lit an oil lamp and heated a little water over its blaze. He was then able to make some warm drink for Swivel and Milly, denying himself until she had swallowed some, and between them they had forced a little of the mixture between the injured boy's lips.

After this Swivel brightened up a bit, and, as he did not try to talk, the hemorrhage did not return. But he was very weak.

Milly and Brandon ate a little solid food too, but their companion was unable to do that.

Now that it was light enough for them to see over the expanse of waters, they found as they had feared, that the whaleback had left them behind during the night.

Not a sign of her presence nor of the presence of any vessel which might come to their assistance, appeared.

The condition of the Success worried them a great deal — or worried Don and Milly at least — for she was gradually sinking at the stern, and the water was gaining more rapidly than they liked in the cabin. Whereas it had only been to Brandon's knees when he had first gone below, it was now up to his waist.

During one of these trips of his to the flooded interior of the brig, he heard Milly's voice excitedly calling to him to come on deck.

"What is it?" he asked, hastily making his appearance.

"Look! look, Brandon!" cried the girl.

She was standing up in the stern and looking over the starboard side.

Brandon hurried toward her and followed the direction of her hand with his eyes.

Far across the tossing sea a dark object rose and fell upon the surface. It was not far above the level of the water, and therefore, though hardly three miles away, had until now remained unseen by the voyagers of the *Success*.

"Is it a wreck like this?" she inquired eagerly.

"It must be," said Brandon, after a careful examination.

"Bring poor papa's long glass up from his state-room," cried Milly. "You can see it then more plainly."

The boy hurried to obey this suggestion and quickly brought the instrument from the dead captain's cabin.

By the aid of the glass the shipwrecked boy and girl could quite plainly view the second wreck, for wreck it was. There was no room for doubt of that.

"It's the hull of a vessel like this," Brandon declared, "though it's not sunken at the stern, and it rides the waves easier."

"There isn't a sign of a spar upon it—it's swept as clean as this," he continued. "There must have

been many vessels treated that way in the storm. Derelicts will be plentiful enough."

He stopped with a startled exclamation, and stared at his companion in perplexity.

"What is it, Brandon?" Milly asked, noting his change of manner.

"I was thinking" he said slowly, "that if the Silver Swan — my father's old brig, you know — kept afloat through this last hurricane, she would likely be in just such shape as yonder hulk."

"Oh, it couldn't be possible, could it?" gasped the girl. "That would be too wonderful a coincidence."

"Not as wonderful as you might think," Brandon returned decisively, gaining confidence in the idea now that some one opposed him. "We are in the very part of the ocean — or at least, I have reason to think we are — in which the Silver Swan was last reported. I tell you, Milly, it may be she!"

"If you could only get to her and see," cried the young girl anxiously.

"I — I will get to her!" declared Brandon, and then he handed the glass to her and went back to sit by poor Swivel and think it over.

Milly, however, remained to watch the distant wreck through the instrument.

By all appearances it was much more buoyant than the Success. Whereas the latter staggered up the long swells and labored through the trough of the sea, the strange derelict rode the waves like a duck, and, propelled by some current, moved a good deal faster, though in the same general direction as themselves.

Brandon, meanwhile, sitting beside the injured boy,

who was now sleeping deeply, was turning over in his mind the project he had suggested.

He knew, even better than Milly, that the *Success* was sinking deeper and deeper every hour, and that before evening the water might begin to wash in over the stern.

The ocean was rapidly becoming smooth. Together they would be able to launch a small raft—a hatch covering, perhaps—place *Swivel* thereon, and by using oars, or perhaps a small sail, might reach the distant derelict quite easily.

Whether it was the *Silver Swan* he had sighted, or not, it certainly rode the swells better and seemed to be far more seaworthy than the *Success*.

Finally, when Milly came up from the stern, he broached his plan to her.

“I don’t want to force you into this, Milly,” he said. “You shall have the deciding vote. Perhaps I am influenced by the hope that yonder vessel is the *Silver Swan*, and maybe this is a dreadfully foolish plan for us to try. I think, though, that it is the best and wisest thing we can do.”

“What can we use for a raft?” the girl asked slowly.

“One of the hatch covers. I have found a tool chest below—I can get at it yet—and there are spars and pieces of canvas for a sail in the same place. I saw them only this morning.”

“Can we launch a raft?” asked the practical Milly.

“I believe we can. It is growing calmer all the time, now, and the rail is so low at the stern that we

can push a well balanced raft into the sea and load it afterward."

"And Swivel?"

"I'm afraid," said Brandon, looking down at the injured boy sadly, "that whatever we do cannot affect Swivel. We can make him as comfortable on the raft as elsewhere."

"Then let us do it," agreed Milly energetically. "I have been watching the other wreck and it seems to sail much better than the Success. The old brig may go down now at any time."

And so they set to work at once at the task of building a raft.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LEFT IN DOUBT

THE task they had set themselves was no child's play, and this Brandon and Milly soon discovered. But they were working for their lives, for according to their reckoning, the Success would not remain above the surface many hours.

The captain's daughter showed herself not only capable of handling tools, but she was strong, too. For years she had sailed up and down the seas with her father—nearly all her life, in fact—for her mother, Brandon had discovered by questioning, had died when she was quite young.

This information assured him that there could be no reasonable doubt of Milly Frank's identity. But for the present he said nothing to the girl about her relatives in New York.

Milly's life, therefore, had made her hardy and strong, although her education was limited in many lines.

But she had a good basis of hard, common sense to build upon, and with a few terms at a well conducted school, she would make as well informed a girl as one could find.

With some trouble they managed to wrench away the fastenings of the forward hatch, and with a heavy

bit which Brandon found in the captain's chest 'tween decks, he was able to bore a hole of sufficient size to receive the butt of the small spar.

He brought two oars on deck also, and a square of sailcloth which was bunglingly fashioned into a sail.

Brandon proposed to leave nothing undone which would make the success of their undertaking more sure. Something *might* happen to keep them from reaching the other wreck, so he brought up several cans of sea biscuit and some canned meats from the cabin stores, and placed them in readiness for loading the raft after it was launched.

Then with the aid of heavy rollers and a short bar they got the raft under way, and once it was started down the inclined deck they had no trouble whatever in keeping it going. The only bother was to keep it from moving too fast.

Brandon found it impracticable to launch the raft from the stern, and therefore cut away a piece of the rail on the starboard side wide enough to admit of the passage of the lumbering hatch.

They took the precaution to fasten a cable to the raft, that it might not get away from them in its plunge overboard, and then, by an almost superhuman effort, rolled the platform into the sea.

It went in with a terrific splash, the sea water wetting both the castaways a good deal, for they had to stand at the rail to steady the raft's plunge into the ocean.

"Hurrah!" Brandon shouted. "It floats, and we shall be able to get away."

He hastened to pull the hatch up under the brig's

rail; and, with Milly's aid, stepped the short mast. Then he placed the boxes and provisions aboard and lashed them firmly, after which a bed was made for Swivel on the raft.

Once more he descended into the half submerged galley and made some more warm drink for the injured boy, and this time Swivel was able to eat a little cracker with it.

They told him what they were about to do, and he seemed to take more interest in the plan than he had in anything since the night before.

"Can — can you carry me, Don?" he asked faintly.

"I can if I don't hurt you," the other replied. "Now don't try to talk, Swivel; but, if I hurt you badly, touch me so I'll know."

With this he lifted the slight form of the lad in his strong arms, and carried him quickly, though easily, across the sloping deck and stepped aboard the raft, which floated almost even with the brig's rail.

The sea had gone down very much now, and it was therefore a simple matter to embark upon the hatch.

Swivel was made comfortable among the blankets, his two friends hoisted the rule sail, the painter was cast off, and the castaways moved slowly away from the hulk of the *Success*.

By this time it was quite late in the afternoon. Still there were several hours of daylight left them, for in this latitude the sun does not set very early, even in the spring.

The time which had elapsed since they had first sighted the second wreck had given this latter an opportunity to sail by the *Success*, for she moved much

faster than the water logged brig. The raft, however, wafted along by the brisk breeze, began to overhaul the stranger at once. By the aid of an oar, in lieu of a rudder, Brandon was able, with little difficulty to keep headed toward their objective point.

Milly, who had brought her father's glass along, as well as the log book of the Success, and all papers of any value belonging to her father, occupied her time in trimming the sail, under Brandon's directions, and in gazing through the glass at the strange vessel.

Soon the outlines of the latter became quite clearly visible.

"It was a brig like papa's," declared the girl, scrutinizing the hull which, although denuded of every inch of spar and rigging, still rode the long swells as though perfectly seaworthy.

"Can you see the stern, Milly?" Brandon asked, in excitement.

"Yes."

"Is there a name on it? The Swan had her name on the stern?"

"There is something on the stern, but it's too far off yet for me to be sure," she replied.

"The raft is behaving beautifully," Brandon declared, "and we shall be near enough presently for you to be sure of what you *do* see."

Milly put down the glass and knelt by Swivel a moment, to place his head more comfortably. Then she went back to the instrument again.

Fifteen minutes passed before she uttered a word, while Brandon watched her face with eager interest.

Finally she passed him the glass and seized the steering oar herself, although she said never a word.

With hands that trembled slightly Brandon placed the instrument to his eye and ranged it upon the stern of the derelict. Long and earnestly did he examine the lettering upon it, and then closed the glass with a snap.

“The Silver Swan — thank God!” he said.

“Oh, I’m so glad, for your sake, Don!” exclaimed Milly, tears of happiness shining in her eyes. “You’ll get your father’s diamonds and be rich.”

“Riches on a wreck won’t do us much good,” returned Don grimly. “I’d rather be a pauper ashore.”

“Ah, but somebody will come very quickly now to take us off,” she said confidently.

“Perhaps. But, did you ever think, that perhaps somebody has been before us?”

“How do you mean?”

“Why, I mean that perhaps somebody has boarded the brig already and secured the diamonds.”

“Who?” asked the girl doubtfully. “Who knows about it excepting your Mr. Wetherbee and that Leroyd and his friend Weeks?”

“Nobody that I know of.”

“And nobody else knew where the jewels were hidden?”

“Probably not.”

“Then do you suppose the steamer has been here first?”

“Oh, no; Caleb would have towed the old Swan to a place of safety if he had found her — especially if



LONG AND EARNESTLY DID HE EXAMINE THE LETTERING UPON IT AND THEN CLOSED THE GLASS WITH

A SNAP

The Quest of the Silver Swan

she is as seaworthy as she appears to be from this distance."

"Then what *do* you mean?" demanded Milly in exasperation.

"What about Leroyd and Weeks?" asked Brandon slowly.

"Well, what about them?"

"Do you suppose they are drowned?"

"They may be."

"And then again they may not be. If they were picked up by some vessel they might have still continued their search for the derelict; might have found her by accident, in fact."

"Oh, Don," cried the girl, "you are supposing altogether too much. Don't conjure up such disheartening ideas as that. Let us hope that we are the first, who know about the treasure, to find the Silver Swan."

"Well, it doesn't seem hardly possible that I should get the diamonds without any more trouble," Brandon said, with a sigh. "I'm afraid there's something wrong about it."

"Don't talk that way, but be thankful that you haven't had more trouble — though, I should say you'd had almost enough," returned Milly, laughing a little.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

HOW THE ENEMY APPEARED

SLOWY the rude craft drew near the hull of the Silver Swan. The brig floated as well as though she had never struck upon Reef Eight, nor been buffeted by the gales of this southern sea for well nigh three months.

The recent storm had done little damage to her deck either, although the rails were smashed in one or two places. Her wheel had been lashed firmly, and strangely enough it still remained so, and now, in this quiet sea, the brig held as even a keel as though she was well manned.

Within two hours of the time the castaways had been assured that the wreck they were nearing *was* the Silver Swan, the raft came up under her lee rail, and Brandon caught the bight of a cable over a pin on the quarter. Then he leaped aboard himself and made the rope secure.

The rail of the Silver Swan was so much higher above the surface of the sea than that of the sinking Success had been that Brandon and Milly had to fashion a "sling" of the sail, in which to get Swivel aboard. The injured youth bore the pain this must have caused him uncomplainingly and was soon made comfortable on the deck of this, their new refuge.

They did not let the raft float away, although they hoped that they should not need it again, and Brandon even took the precaution of fastening it with a second cable before they started to explore the brig.

The Silver Swan had been almost uninjured by her long journey with no pilot but the fickle winds and currents of the ocean. The masts had, of course, all gone in the first gale, and her crew had cut away every bit of the wreckage before leaving her to her fate on the reef.

The hatches had been battened down and the doors of the forecastle and cabin likewise closed, so that the occasional seas which had washed over her had done little toward injuring the interior.

Leaving Milly to look out for Swivel, Brandon forced open the cabin door (it had swelled badly during the long siege of stormy weather which the brig had withstood) and went below. Naturally everything was in confusion — tables, chairs, and what not overturned; but nothing about the cabin seemed injured.

The cook's quarters showed a bad state of affairs, however, for there wasn't a whole dish (except the tin ones) in the place, and the stove lay on its back kicking its four feet in the air as though in its last expiring agonies.

Brandon righted this useful utensil first, and mended the broken pipe as best he could. Then, when he had a fire started in the thing, he went on to examine the smaller cabins or staterooms.

He knew his father's well enough and looked in. But he could not bear to enter that just now, and so

fixed upon one, which should have belonged to the second mate, for the use of poor Swivel.

He went back to Milly and the injured boy then, and removed the latter to the brig's cabin.

Milly, who was a capable girl in more ways than one, went to work at once to get up a substantial meal from the stores which they had brought from the Success, with the addition of some eatables belonging to the provisions of the Swan.

It was rapidly growing dark, and to prevent the liability of a collision, Brandon hunted out some of the ship's lanterns and hung two in the bows, and another at the masthead, devoutly hoping that the lights, placed in these peculiar positions, would attract the attention of some passing vessel.

Then the lamp in the cabin was filled and lighted, and for the first time in forty-eight hours or more, they sat down to a comfortable meal.

At least, Milly and Brandon sat down; Swivel remained in his berth, with the door of the stateroom open, and watched them with a wan smile on his pale face.

"Now, Brandon, why don't you see if the diamonds are here?" asked the young girl, as they finished their supper. "I thought you would be eager to look as soon as you got aboard."

Don glanced across the table at her curiously.

"Do you know," he said hesitatingly. "I'm half afraid to. It would be a terrible disappointment if they should not be there — and perhaps they are not."

"Come, come! don't be foolish," said practical Milly.

"Take a look in the secret closet — wherever it is — or I shall be tempted to do it myself."

Brandon, thus urged, rose and approached the companionway.

"Third panel, on port side," he repeated. "That was Caleb's direction, if I remember rightly. Now let's see."

He pressed on the designated panel, first one way and then another. It seemed a trifle loose, but otherwise refused to move.

"Maybe I've made a mistake," he muttered, when suddenly, on his pressing downward on the edge of the wood, a section of the panel dropped out leaving a shallow, metal lined cavity displayed to view.

"Bring the lamp, Milly," he cried eagerly.

The girl obeyed and held the light so that it might illuminate the interior of the secret closet. There *was* something in the compartment!

Brandon hastily thrust in his hand and drew forth a flat, heavy package, sealed in oiled silk and bound with a cord. Hurrying to the cabin table with his prize he tore off the cord, broke the seals, and unwound the outer wrappings.

Milly, quite as excited as himself, held the lamp closer, watching his movements anxiously.

Beneath the outer covering was a flat pouch of chamois skin, the flap sealed at one end. This seal the youth broke without hesitation, and in another instant had poured a glittering shower of gems upon the polished surface of the cabin table.

"Diamonds! diamonds! thousands of dollars' worth!" cried Milly delightedly, running her fingers

through the little heap of glittering stones and letting them fall in a flashing shower from her hands.

The gems were uncut — at least by the hand of man — but even in their crude state they sparkled wonderfully.

For several moments they feasted their eyes on the brilliant spectacle, and then Milly filled both hands with the precious gems and ran to show Swivel.

“Whew!” whispered that youth, his eyes growing round with wonder. “Wot a lot of shiners!”

“Don’t let him talk, Milly,” commanded Brandon, beginning to see that it would never do for them to excite the sick boy by the sight of the gems. “When he is better he can see them all.”

The young girl came back with the jewels, smiling happily at her friend. She seemed quite as joyful because of his good fortune as though the gems were her own.

Brandon took the precautions to close the door between the cabin and Swivel’s stateroom soon after this, that the boy might go to sleep, and then he and Milly sat down at the table and counted the diamonds.

There were no very large gems among the lot, but they were of fair size and of the purest white.

It was late that night before the two castaways retired. Brandon prepared what had once been Caleb Wetherbee’s quarters for Milly, but he himself slept in the cabin, rolled up in a blanket on the floor, that he might be near Swivel.

They were so exhausted from their privations of the past day and a half that they slept until far into the next forenoon. Swivel was actually better, and

had no more sinking spells, so that Milly and Brandon began to hope for his recovery.

Just after they rose Brandon saw a sailing vessel far down on the horizon; but it passed by without noticing the brig. And once during the day the smoke of a steam vessel blotted the lines where the sky and sea met, far to the eastward.

These momentary glimpses of other craft gave them some hope, for it showed them that they were not entirely out of the track of shipping.

That night Brandon hung the lanterns out again, and according to arrangement with Milly, remained on deck to watch. She was to watch days, and he at night, and he fulfilled his lonely vigil faithfully.

But not a vessel appeared to gladden his lonely eyes.

Milly rose early on that third day and prepared breakfast, after eating which Brandon went to bed. The sky remained beautifully clear, and they had nothing to fear from the elements, for the glass forecasted a continued spell of fine weather.

Milly took up her position with the long spy glass on the deck, and swept the horizon for some sign of rescue. Occasionally she went down to look in on Swivel, and about noon to prepare the dinner.

When the meal was nearly ready the young girl ran up the companionway stairs again for a final look before she summoned Brandon from his stateroom. As she put the glass to her eye and gazed toward the west a cry of surprise and joy burst from her lips.

Approaching the derelict brig, with a great expanse of canvas spread to the fresh breeze, was a small

schooner, the water dashing white and frothy from her bows!

“Saved! saved!” gasped the girl. “Oh, thank God!”

While she had been below the vessel had come in sight, and was now less than half a mile from the wreck.

What seemed strange, however, was that the schooner was laying a course directly for the brig as though it was her intention to board her.

“Brandon! Brandon!” she cried, running back to the cabin and rapping on the door.

“Aye, aye!” he shouted, and was out of his berth in a moment.

“What is it?” he asked, appearing in the cabin.

“There is a schooner coming right for us!” cried Milly, laughing and crying for joy. “I’ve just discovered it. It’s about here.”

She was about to dart out upon deck again, but Brandon grasped her arm.

“Wait, Milly,” he said cautiously. “Have they seen you yet?”

“No; but I want them to.”

“Not yet. We don’t know what they may be. Let me look at them,” said the boy rapidly.

He seized the glass, and mounting to the top of the stairs, peered out from the shelter of the companion-way at the strange schooner.

She lay to about a quarter of a mile away from the derelict, and a boat was already half way between the vessel and the wreck. Brandon examined the men in it intently.

Only a moment did he scrutinize them, and then he dropped the glass with a cry of alarm. He had recognized Jim Leroyd and the fellow Weeks among the crew of the small boat!

CHAPTER XXXIX

SHOWING HOW MR. WEEKS MADE HIS LAST MOVE

"WHAT is it, Brandon?" gasped 'Milly, seeing the look upon her companion's face.

"Look! look!" whispered the youth, thrusting the glass into her hands.

Milly gazed in terrified silence at the approaching boat.

She, as well as Don, at once recognized the villainous Leroyd and his friend, Sneaky Al, and her heart sank with fear.

"What shall we do?" she inquired at last, turning to Brandon.

The latter turned back into the cabin without a word, opened the secret closet and grasping the package of diamonds thrust it into the breast of his shirt.

"I'll hide in the hold," he said, appearing to grasp the situation at once. "I do not believe they'll find me. Tell Swivel, and he'll know what to tell and what not to tell, if they try to pump him.

"They needn't know that I'm here at all, or that you know anything about me. They'll not dare to hurt you, Milly. But I shall be on hand in case they try it."

"But what can you do against so many?" she returned, with a hysterical laugh.

"Something — you'll see. They shan't hurt you while I'm alive," he declared earnestly.

"But suppose they take us off with them — Swivel and I?"

"Go, of course," returned Brandon promptly. "Leave me to shift for myself. When you get ashore communicate with Adoniram Pepper & Co. of New York, and tell them how I'm fixed. Good by, Milly!"

He wrung her hand warmly and disappeared in the direction of the booby hatch 'tween decks. At the same moment there were voices outside and the noise of the schooner's small boat scraping against the side of the brig.

Milly, with hands clasped tightly across her breast, as though in the endeavor to still the heavy beating of her heart, remained standing beside the cabin table as the men boarded the brig and entered the cabin.

The first to come below was the ill featured Leroyd himself, and close behind him was Alfred Weeks and two other men from the crew of the schooner.

"Dash my top lights!" cried the sailor, as he caught sight of the young girl standing there so silently.

He retreated precipitately upon his friend Weeks, who was almost as greatly astonished as himself.

"How under the sun came you here, Miss Frank?" demanded Sneaky Al, stepping forward.

But Leroyd grabbed his arm and strove to drag him back.

"Stop, man! 'tis not a human!" he gasped, his usually red face fairly pallid. "It's the spirit of the poor girl. I knowed how 'twould be we'en we left her aboard the *Success*."

Weeks shook off his grasp in contempt.

"I'm only too willing to meet such a charming ghost as this," he said, with a smirk, smiling at the young girl. "Don't be a fool, Jim. It is Miss Frank herself, though how she came here is the greatest of all mysteries."

"'Tis the work o' Davy Jones hisself," muttered the sailor.

The other two men, both low browed, sullen appearing fellows looked on without comment.

"How did you get here?" repeated Weeks.

"We came from the Success just before she was about to sink," Milly declared. "Did you come to save us?"

"*Us?*" cried Weeks, in utter amazement. "For goodness' sake, who's with you?"

"After poor papa was killed," there was a little choke in Milly's voice here, "a vessel overhauled the Success and a boy tried to save me. He brought a rope to the wreck, but it parted before we could haul in a heavier cable, and the gale swept the other vessel away during the night."

"Brave chap!" muttered Weeks. "Where is he now?"

"There," she said, pointing to the open door of the stateroom in which Swivel was lying. "He is hurt."

"But that doesn't explain how ye got here, miss," said the sailor suspiciously.

"I hadn't got to that, Mr. Leroyd. Had you been men, you would not have left me to drown as you did, and then there would have been no necessity for my remaining for three days on these two vessels."

"You misjudge us, I assure you," Weeks hastened to say, as Leroyd shrank back at the girl's scornful words. "Both Leroyd and I were in one boat and the second mate was in the other boat. He declared you to be safe, and I thought, and so did Mr. Leroyd, that you were with him.

"It was not until we were picked up by the schooner *Natchez*, of *Bermuda*, and carried to those islands, that we discovered your deplorable loss."

But Milly did not believe this plausible story. She had too vivid a remembrance of Leroyd and the cowardly Weeks during the gale, to be impressed by this tale.

"This brig passed the *Success* on the second day after you left me, and we made a raft and came to it, because it was so much more seaworthy than papa's vessel," said Milly coldly.

"You say this boy is hurt, eh?" said Weeks, stepping around to the stateroom door and peering in at Swivel, who was sleeping heavily despite the sound of voices. "Gee! he does look bad, doesn't he?"

"Well, wot in thunder shall we do?" growled Leroyd at length. "We've got no time to spend in fooling, Al. No knowing what that — that other craft is."

"Miss Milly," Weeks assured her, without paying any attention to the words of his companion, "we shall have the pleasure of taking you and your brave young friend ashore with us — after we settle a little business here."

"Well, I'm glad ter hear you gittin' down ter business," declared Leroyd, with satisfaction. "Come,

now, skin out of here, you fellers," he added, addressing the two men at the companionway. "We'll come up or call for you when we want ye."

The men departed and the sailor turned again to his partner.

"Hurry!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Where's the place you said they were hid? It's somewhere in the cabin here, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Then send the gal on deck, too, and let's rummage."

"We won't be rude enough to do that," said Weeks, with another smirk at Milly. "We will just request the young lady not to speak of what she sees us do."

"I don't care. Anything, so long's we get 'em and get out o' here. Suppose—"

"Never mind supposing any longer. Let me see, now," and Weeks walked slowly to the upper end of the cabin and counted off three panels from the companionway on the port side.

Quickly his long finger touched the surface of the panel, pressing here and there and rattling the loose board, and finally the panel dropped down, disclosing the secret cupboard — empty!

Leroyd darted forward.

"What is it? Is it there?" he cried.

"The infernal luck! it's empty!" shouted Weeks, and with a volley of maledictions he staggered back and dropped into the nearest chair.

Leroyd was fairly purple.

"Have you tricked me!" he yelled, seizing his partner by the shoulders and shaking him.

"No, you fool! why should I trick you? That is where Caleb Wetherbee said the diamonds were hid."

"Sh!" growled the sailor. "D'ye want that gal ter know everything? She knows too much now."

"She doesn't know anything about this; why should she?"

"Then, what's become of them?"

"I can tell you that," returned Weeks. "Cale Wetherbee's been here."

"And left the Silver Swan a derelict — almost as good as new — an' him with a steamer?" roared Leroyd. "Man, you're dreaming!"

"Then — what — has happened!" asked Alfred Weeks slowly.

"The gal — the gal here," declared Leroyd, turning fiercely upon Milly. "She's found 'em, I tell ye!"

He advanced upon the shrinking girl so threateningly, that Milly screamed, and rushed to the companionway. Leroyd pursued her, and Weeks followed the angry sailor.

Up to the deck darted the girl, and almost into the arms of one of the men whom Leroyd had driven out of the brig's cabin. The fellow looked excited and he shouted to the angry sailor as soon as he saw him:

"De steamer come — up queek. Mr. Leroyd! Dey put off-a boat already."

Milly, who had dodged past the speaker, turned her eyes to the east — the opposite direction from which the schooner had appeared — and beheld a steamship, her two funnels vomiting thick smoke, just rounded to, less than two cable lengths away.

It was the whaleback steamer, Number Three!

Already a boat had put off from the whaleback and it was now being swiftly propelled toward the Silver Swan.

The two men whom Leroyd and Weeks had brought with them from the schooner, had been smoking in the lee of the deck-house and had not discovered the steamer's approach until she was almost upon the derelict.

"Curses on it!" Weeks exclaimed as he took in the situation and recognized the steamer, whose smoke they had beheld in the distance, before boarding the brig.

But Leroyd kept on after the fleeing Milly. He believed that she knew something about the missing gems, or had them in her possession, and he was determined to get them.

Milly ran to the bows of the brig, with Leroyd close behind her.

"Let that gal alone!" roared a voice from the approaching boat. "Give way, boys! I won't leave a whole bone in that scoundrel's body, once I get my paws on him."

In an instant the small boat was under the brig's rail, and Caleb Wetherbee himself was upon her deck with an agility quite surprising. Mr. Coffin and two of the boat's crew were right behind him.

A moment later the panting girl, having eluded the clumsier sailor, was behind the shelter of Caleb's towering form and those of his companions.

Weeks stopped Leroyd in his mad rush for the girl, and whispered a few swift sentences in his ear. Then he stepped forward.

"By what right do you board this brig, Mr. Wetherbee?" he asked. "This is a derelict. We have seized her and propose to tow her to port for salvage. I command you to leave her."

"How long since you boarded her for that purpose?" Mr. Coffin demanded, for Caleb was fairly purple with rage and surprise.

"Since half an hour ago," replied Weeks calmly.

"If that is the case, I think I have a prior claim," suddenly interrupted a voice. "I came aboard two days ago and I claim the Silver Swan as mine by right of discovery!"

The astounded company turned toward the cabin entrance and beheld Brandon Tarr just appearing from below.

CHAPTER XL

IN WHICH THE ENEMY IS DEFEATED AND THE QUEST OF
THE SILVER SWAN IS ENDED

“BRANDON!” shouted Caleb; “it’s the boy himself!”

But Leroyd uttered a howl of rage and sprang toward the youth, his face aflame and his huge fist raised to strike. Caleb, however, despite his wooden leg, was too quick for him.

He flew to Don’s rescue, and ere Leroyd could reach his intended victim, the old mariner felled the villain to the deck with one swing of his powerful arm.

Weeks, who had also dashed forward to aid in Brandon’s overthrow, was seized by the doughty captain of the whaleback and tossed completely over the brig’s rail.

“Git out o’ here, the hull kit an’ bilin’ of ye!” Caleb roared, starting for the two men belonging to the schooner.

They obeyed with surprising alacrity, and the old man picked up the dazed Leroyd and tossed him into the boat after them. Weeks, dripping and sputtering, was hauled aboard by his companions, and the small boat was rowed back to the schooner, while Brandon, unable to restrain his emotion, threw up his hat and shouted, “Hurrah!” with all his might.

It occupied the three castaways — Milly, Brandon, and Swivel — and Mr. Coffin and Caleb, fully two hours to straighten out matters satisfactorily. They had so much to tell and so much to explain for one another's benefit, that the whaleback had run in and the crew passed a hawser from her stern to the bow of the brig, under Mr. Bolin's directions, ere the conference was ended.

Words cannot well express the astonishment that those on the whaleback felt at finding the castaways aboard the *Silver Swan* — or at finding the brig itself. For the past twelve hours they had all believed that the derelict was a victim of Uncle Sam's feverish impatience to destroy all obstructions to commerce in his ocean.

Upon figuring the whole matter up, it was pretty evident that it was the *Success* which the naval ensign had exploded, for she had been sunk at the stern sufficiently to cover her name, and had been so battered by the waves that the lettering on the bow was also probably unreadable.

After believing, as they did, that the *Swan* was sunk and all her treasures with her, the whaleback had sailed about in circles, seeking the wreck of the *Success*, on which they believed Brandon and his two companions to be.

It was only by providential fortune that the brig had finally been sighted, and the whaleback had steamed up just in time to wrest the *Silver Swan* from Messrs. Leroyd and Weeks.

Swivel was taken aboard the steamer and carefully examined by Lawrence Coffin, who was no mean sur-

geon, and he pronounced the youth as seriously, if not dangerously, injured. He had burst a blood vessel and had sustained other internal injuries, and would probably be unfit for work of any kind for a long time.

"Best place for him is the Marine Hospital," declared Mr. Coffin to Brandon and Caleb that night in the steamer's cabin.

"Hospital nothin'!" exclaimed Caleb, with conviction. "The hospital is all right for them as hain't go no homes — like as I hadn't, nor no friends — a good deal as I *was* — nor nothing'; but *that* boy ain't goin' to lack a shelter as long as *I'm* alive."

"Best not take him on a sea voyage just yet, Mr. Wetherbee," responded Mr. Coffin seriously.

"I don't intend to. He's goin' ter live with me, though."

"But won't you sail the Silver Swan?" asked the first officer. "She's as good as new and she's yours, too, I understand."

"No, sir, I'm not. When the Silver Swan is in shape again, I shall put Mr. Bolin in command of her. I've already spoken to him about it."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Coffin. "And the whale-back?"

"You'll command her; that was the agreement I made with Adoniram before we left New York."

"Thank you, Mr. Wetherbee," exclaimed the first officer gratefully. "But may I ask what you propose to do?"

"I shall retire from the sea — that is, from commandin' a ship, any way."

"So you're goin' to keep bachelor's hall, and going to take this Swivel to it?" and Mr. Coffin shook his head gravely. "He really needs a woman's nursing."

Caleb grew very red in the face, and blew his nose furiously.

"He—he'll get it, Mr. Coffin," he said hesitatingly.

Both Brandon and the first officer looked at the old tar in blank amazement.

"I said he'd get it," repeated Caleb solemnly, though with a rather shamefaced look. "He'll get it, sir, an' from the trimmest little woman ye ever see."

"It's Miss Frances!" burst forth Brandon at length.

"It is her, my lad. An' hain't I right erbout her bein' a mighty trim one?"

"She is, indeed! She's splendid!" cried Brandon enthusiastically, seizing his friend's mighty palm.

Mr. Coffin also offered his congratulations, but went away afterward with rather a dazed look on his face.

He was pretty well acquainted with the old seaman, and he wondered, as did Brandon, how under the sun Caleb had ever plucked up the courage to ask Adoniram Pepper's sister for her hand.

"Yes, lad," said the old man gravely; "I've been floating about from sea to sea and from land to land for the better part of fifty years, an' now I'm goin' ter lay back an' take it easy for the rest of my days."

And as Brandon wrung his hand again he felt that the old seaman fully deserved it all.

* * * * *

In good time the whaleback, with her tow, the derelict brig, arrived in New York, where the Silver

Swan was at once sent to the shipyard for repairs, and is now doing her owner good service as a merchantman.

Adoniram Pepper & Co.'s scheme of recovering derelicts in general and towing them in for their salvage, has never amounted to anything yet, for directly following the trip of Number Three (rechristened the Milly Frank, by the way), the owner received a good offer for putting the whaleback in the European trade, and she is still carrying grain to England, with Mr. Coffin as commander.

Milly Frank's joy at finding her relatives, of whose existence her father had never told her, was only equaled by the joy of Adoniram and Frances Pepper themselves in recovering their "little sister" again — for as such Milly appears to them.

Miss Frances is of course Miss Frances no longer; but with her husband, she still occupies her brother's house in New York, and Milly dwells with them.

Brandon, who is at present in the naval school, resides there also during vacation, and calls the company of assorted humanity there gathered "the happy family."

Swivel is in the West — that land of bracing and salubrious climate — for after he recovered from the accident he sustained on the wreck, the doctors told him that he could never live and be strong in the East again. So, with the assistance of Caleb, Adoniram, and Brandon, who quarreled not a little as to who should do the most for him, he was sent West, and a glorious start in business life was given him in that rapidly growing country.

Brandon himself, though made independently rich by the sale of the diamonds found by Anson Tarr, loves the sea too well to give it up altogether, and, as I said, is in the naval academy at Annapolis. When he is through school and gets his appointment, he and Milly may — but I won't anticipate.

As for the disappointed Uncle Arad, he never pressed the matter of Brandon's arrest after the failure of the plot (hatched up by himself and Messrs. Leroyd and Weeks) to convert his nephew's property to his own use. He still remains on the farm at Chopmist, and by report is as crabbed and stingy as ever; but Brandon has had no desire to return to the farm since his Quest of the Silver Swan was ended.

THE END

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